BESIDE STILL WATERS

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BESIDE STILL WATERS

By

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"I will run the way of Thy commandments; when Thou hast set my heart at liberty."

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Beside Still Waters

I

HUGH NEVILLE was fond of tender and minute retrospect, and often indulged himself, in lonely hours, with the meditative pleasures of memory. To look back into the old years was to him like gazing into a misty place, with sudden and bright glimpses, and then the cloud closed in again; but it was not only with his own life that he concerned himself; he liked to trace in fancy his father's eager boyhood, brought up as he had been in a great manufacturing town, by a mother of straitened means, who yet maintained, among all her restrictions, a careful tradition of gentle blood and honourable descent. The children of that household had been nurtured with no luxuries and few enjoyments. Every pound of the small income had had its appointed use; but being, as they were, ardent, emotional natures, they had contrived to extract the best kind of pleasure out

of books, art, and music; and the only trace that survived in Hugh's father of the old narrow days, was a deep-seated hatred of wastefulness and luxury, which, in a man of generous nature, produced certain anomalies, hard for his children, living in comparative wealth and ease, to interpret. His father, the boy observed, was liberal to a fault in large matters, but scrupulously and needlessly particular about small expenses. He would take the children on a foreign tour, and then practise an elaborate species of discomfort, in an earnest endeavour to save some minute disbursements. He would give his son a magnificent book, and chide him because he cut, instead of untying, the string of the parcel. Long after, the boy, disentangling his father's early life in diaries and letters, would wish, with a wistful regret, that he had only had the clue to this earlier; he would have sympathised, he thought, with the idea that lay beneath the little economies, instead of fretting over them, and discussing them rebelliously with his sisters. His father was a man of almost passionate affections; there was nothing in the world that he more desired than the company and the sympathy of his children; but he had, besides this, an intense and tremulous sense of responsibility towards them. He attached an undue importance to small indications of character;

and thus the children were seldom at ease with their father, because he rebuked them constantly, and found frequent fault, doing almost violence to his tenderness, not from any pleasure in censoriousness, but from a terror, that was almost morbid, of the consequences of the unchecked development of minute tendencies.

Hugh's mother was of a very different disposition; she was fully as affectionate as his father, but of a brighter, livelier, more facile nature; she came of a wealthy family, and had never known the hard discipline from which his father had suffered. She was a good many years younger than her husband; they were united by the intensest affection; but while she devoted herself to him with a perfect understanding of, and sympathy with, his somewhat jealous and puritanical nature, she did not escape the severity of his sense of responsibility, and his natural instinct for attempting to draw those nearest to him into the circle of his high, if rigid, standards. Long afterwards, Hugh grew to discern a greater largeness and liberality in her methods of dealing with life and other natures than his father had displayed; and no shadow of any kind had ever clouded his love and admiration for his mother; his love indeed could not have deepened; but he came gradually to discern the sweet and patient wisdom which,

after many sorrows, nobly felt and ardently endured, filled and guided her large and loving heart.

His father, after a highly distinguished academical career, entered the Church; and at the time of Hugh's birth he held an important country living, together with one of the Archdeaconries of the diocese.

Hugh was the eldest child. Two other children, both sisters, were born into the household. Hugh in later days loved to trace in family papers the full and vivid life which had surrounded his unconscious self. His mother had been married young, and was scarcely more than a girl when he was born; his father was already a man grave beyond his years, full of affairs, and constantly occupied. But his melancholy moods, and they were many, had drawn him to value with a pathetic intentness the quiet family life. Hugh could trace in old diaries the days his father and mother had spent, the walks they had taken, the books they had read together. There seemed for him to brood over those days, in imagination, a sort of singular brightness. He always thought of the old life as going on somewhere, behind the pine woods, if he could only find it. He could never feel of it as wholly past, but rather as possessing the living force of some romantic book, into the atmos-

phere of which it was possible to plunge at will.

And then his own life; how vivid and delicate the perceptions were! Looking back, it always seemed to be summer in those days. He could remember the grassy walks of the pleasant garden, which wound among the shrubberies; the old-fashioned flowers, sweet-williams and Canterbury-bells, that filled the deep borders; the rose-garden, with the pointed white buds, or the large pink roses, full of scent, that would fall at a touch and leave nothing but an orange-seeded stump. But there had been no thought of pathos to him in those years, as there came to be afterwards, in the fading of sweet things; it was all curious, delightful, strange. The impressions of sense were tyrannously strong, so that there was hardly room for reflection or imagination; there was the huge chestnut covered with white spires, that sent out so heavy a fragrance in the spring that it was at last cut down; but the felling of the tree was a mere delightful excitement, not a thing to be grieved over. The country was very wild all round, with tracts of heath and sand. The melodious buzzing of nightjars in hot mid-summer evenings, as they swept softly along the heather, lived constantly in his memory. In the moorland, half a mile away, stood some brick-kilns,

strange plastered cones, with blackened tops, from which oozed a pungent smoke; those were too terrible to be visited alone; but as he walked past with his nurse, it was delightful and yet appalling to look into the door of the kiln, and see its fiery, glowing heart, Two things in particular the boy grew to love; one was the sight of water in all its forms; a streamlet near the house trickled out of a bog, full of cotton-grass; there were curious plants to be found here, a low pink marsh-bugle, and the sundew, with its strange, viscid red hands extended; the stream passed by clear dark pools to a lake among the pines, and fell at the farther end down a steep cascade; the dark gliding water, the mysterious things that grew beneath, the fish that paused for an instant and were gone, had all a deep fascination for the boy, speaking, as they seemed to do, of a world near and yet how far removed from his own!

And then still more wonderingly, with a kind of interfusion of terror and mystery, did he love the woodlands of that forest country. To steal along the edge of the covert, with the trees knee-deep in fern, to hear the flies hum angrily within, to find the glade in spring carpeted with blue-bells—all these sights and sounds took hold of his childish heart with a deep passion that never left him.

All this life was, in memory, as I have said, a series of vignettes and pictures; the little dramas of the nursery, the fire that glowed in the grate, the savour of the fresh-cut bread at meal-times, the games on wet afternoons, with a tent made out of shawls and chairs, or a fort built of bricks; these were the pictures that visited Hugh in after days, small concrete things and sensations; he could trace, he often thought, in later years, that his early life had been one more of perception than anything else; sights and sounds and scents had filled his mind, to the exclusion of almost all beside. He could remember little of his relations with those about him; the figures of the family and servants were accepted as all part of the environment. The only very real figure was the old nurse, whose rare displeasure he had sorrowed over more than anything else in the world, and whose chance words, uttered to another servant and overheard by the child, that she was thinking of leaving them, had given him a deeper throb of emotion than anything he had before known, or was for many years to know.

But the time for the eager and romantic association with other people, which was to play so large a part in Hugh's life, was not yet come. People had to be taken as they came, and their value depended entirely upon their kindness or

unkindness. There was no sense of gratitude as yet, or desire to win affection. If they were kind, they were unthinkingly and instinctively liked. If they thwarted or interfered with the child's little theory of existence, his chosen amusements, his hours of leisure, his loved pursuits, they were simply obstacles around which his tiny stream of life must find its way as it best could.

There was indeed one other chief delight for the child: the ordered services of the Church hard by the house. He loved with all his heart the fallen day, the pillared vault, the high dusty cornices, the venerable scent; and the services, with their music solemn and sweet, the postures of the ministers, the faces, clothes, and habits of the congregation—all was a delightful field of pleasing experience. Yet religion was a wholly unreal thing to the child. He learned his Bible lessons and psalms; he knew the liturgy by heart; but the religious idea, the thought of God, the Christian life of effort, were all things that he merely accepted as so many facts that were taught him, but without the least interest in them, or even the shadowiest attempt to apply them to his own life. It seemed strange to Hugh when, in years long after, religion came to have so deep a meaning to him, that it should have been so entirely

a blank to him in the early days. God was no more to him than a far-off monarch; a mighty and shadowy person, very remote and powerful, but the circle of whose influence never touched his own. And yet one of the deepest desires of his father's mind had been to bring a sense of religion home to his children. Hugh used to wonder how he had missed it; but the practical application of religion, to which the Bible lessons had led up, had been to the child a mere relief from the tension of thought, because at last he had escaped from the material teaching about which he might be questioned, and which he would be expected to remember.

Personal relations, then, had scarcely existed for Hugh as a child. Older and bigger people, armed with a vague authority, had to be obeyed, and the boy had no theory which could account for their inconsequent behaviour; they were amiable or ill-humoured, just or unjust; he never attempted to criticise or condemn them by a moral standard; he simply accepted them as they were, and kept as much as possible out of the way of those who manifested sharpness or indifference. With children of his own age it was in many ways the same, though there seemed to the boy to be more hope of influencing their behaviour; threats, anger, promises, compliance could be applied; but of

the affection that simply desired to please the object of its love, the boy knew nothing. Once or twice he went away from home on a visit, and because he wept on his departure, he was supposed to have a tender and emotional nature; it was not tenderness, at least not tenderness for others, that made him weep. It was partly the terror of the unknown and the unfamiliar; it was partly the interruption to the even tenor of his life and the customary engagements of his day; and in this respect the boy had what may be called a middled-aged temperament, an intense dislike of any interference with his own ways; he had no enterprise, none of the high-hearted enjoyment of novelty, unless he was surrounded by a bulwark of familiar personalities; but partly, too, his love was all given to inanimate things; and as he drove out of the gate on one of these visits, the thought that the larches of the copse should be putting out their rosy buds, the rhododendrons thrusting out their gummy, spiky cases, the stream passing slowly through its deep pools, the beehive in the little birch avenue beginning to wake to life, and that he should not be there to go his accustomed rounds, and explore all the minute events of his dear domain—it was this that

brought out the tears afresh, with a bitter, uncomforted sense of loss and bereavement.

So the early years passed for the boy, in a dream full to the brim of small wonders and fragrant mysteries. How pleasant it was to sink to sleep on summer evenings with the imagination of voyaging all night in a little boat or carriage; how delightful to wake, with the morning sun streaming in at the window, to hear the casement ivy tap on the pane, and to rehearse in the mind all the tiny pleasures of the long day! His short lessons were easy enough for the boy; he was quick and acute, and had a good memory; but he took not the smallest interest in them, except the interest of making a situation go smoothly; the only interest was in the thought of the unmolested lonely play that was to follow. He cared little for games, though they had a certain bitter excitement, the desire of emulation, the joy of triumph about them. He loved best an aimless wending from haunt to haunt, an accumulation of small treasures in places unknown to others; and, most of all, the rich sense of observation of a hundred curious and delicate things; the nests of birds in the shrubbery, the glossy cones of the young pines, the green, uncurling fingers of the bracken, the fresh green sword-grass that grew beneath

the firs; he did not care to know the nature of the reasons of these things; it was enough simply to see them, to explore them with restless fingers, to recognise their scents, hues, and savours, with the sharp and unblunted perceptions of childhood.

Then came the intellectual awakening. Hugh's mother, who had an extraordinary gift for improvisation, began to tell the children stories in the nursery evenings; and these tales of giants and fairies grew to have an extreme fascination for the child; not that he peopled his own world with them, as some imaginative children do; the boy's perceptions were too definite for that; such beings belonged to a different region; he had no idea that they existed or had ever existed. They belonged to the story world, which was associated in his mind with bright fires and toys put away, when he nestled as close as he could to his mother's knee, with her hand in both his own, exploring every ring and every finger, till he could recall, many years after, each turn and curve, and even each finger-nail of those dear hands. And then at last came the supremest joy of all; the children used to be summoned down to their mother's room, and she began to read aloud *Ivanhoe* to them; and then indeed a new

world, a world that had really existed sprang to light.

Hugh used to wonder afterwards how much he had really understood of what was read; but the whole thing seemed absolutely alive to him; his pictorial fancy came into play, and the details of woods and heaths that he knew so well began to serve him in good stead; and then the child, who had before thought of reading as merely a tiresome art that he was forced to practise, found that it was the key that admitted him into this wonderful world. It did not indeed destroy his relish for the outer world of nature, for at all hours of the day, when it was possible to slip out of doors, he went his solitary way, looking, looking; until every tree and flower-border and thicket of the small domain became so sharply imprinted upon the mind that, years after, he could walk in memory through the sunny garden, and recall the minutest details with an astonishing accuracy.

But books became for the child a large part of his life. It was a story that he desired, something that should create a scene for him, personalities like or unlike his own, whose deeds and words he could survey, leaning, so it seemed to him, from a magic casement into the new scene. His father, whose taste was for the improving in literature, was willing enough that the boy

should be supplied with books, but hardly understood that the child was living in a world of bright fancies and simple dreams. His father, moreover, who had all his life had a harder and more definite turn of thought, and had desired knowledge of a precise kind, wanted the boy to read the little dry books, uncouthly and elaborately phrased, that had pleased himself in his own early days. Hugh's mind was precise enough; but these terse biographies, these books of travel, these semi-scientific stories seemed to Hugh only to relate the things that he did not want to know. His father had been born at a time when the interest in the education of children was first taking shape, the days of Miss Edgeworth's *Frank*, and *Harry and Lucy*, that strange atmosphere of gravity and piety, when children were looked upon as a serious responsibility more than as a poetical accessory to life; not as mysterious and fairylike creatures, to be delicately wooed and tenderly guided, but rather as little men and women, to be repressed and trained, and made as soon as possible to have a sense of responsibility too. Hugh used to look at the old books in later days, and wonder what the exact social position of the parents in such books as *Frank*, and *Harry and Lucy*, was supposed to be. They lived in the country; they were not appar-

ently wealthy; they lived with much simplicity. Yet Harry's father seemed to have nothing to do but to conduct his children over manufactories, and to take them for long walks —in the course of which he diligently improved their minds by a species of Socratic inquiry. But Hugh never thought of quarrelling with the books provided; he seized upon any trace of humanity or amusement that they afforded, any symptoms of character and liveliness, and simply evaded the improving portion, which blew like a dry wind over his spirit. When his father talked over the books with the child, he listened tolerantly to the boy's amusement at how the cake had rolled down the hill, or how the little pig had got into the garden; but he was disappointed that the boy seemed not to care whether the stone which Harry threw described a parabola or not, though there was an odious diagram to explain it, full of dotted lines and curves. Yet the boy held on his way, deaf to all that did not move him or interest him, and fixing jealously on all that fed his fancy. Such books as *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and *Masterman Ready* were wells of delight, enacted as they were in a strange and exciting world; and he was sensitive, too, to the beauty of metre and sonorous phrases, learning poetry so easily that it was supposed to be a species of wilfulness in him that

the Collects and texts, and the very Psalms—that seemed to him so unreal and husk-like then, and that later became to him like fruits full of refreshment and savour and sweet juice—found their way slowly into his memory, and were so easily forgotten.

II

THE time came for Hugh to go to school. He drifted, it seemed to him afterwards, with a singular indifference and apathy of mind, into the new life, though the parting from home was one of dumb misery; not that he cared deeply, as a softer-hearted child might have cared, at being parted from his father, his mother, his sisters. People, even those nearest to the boy, were still only a part of the background of life, a little nearer perhaps, but hardly dearer, hardly more important than trees and flowers, except that a greater part of his life was spent with them. But the last afternoon in the familiar scene —it was a hot, bright September day—tried the boy's fortitude to the uttermost. He felt as though the trees and walks would almost miss his greeting and presence—and what was the saddest part of all to him was that he could not be sure of this. Was the world that he loved indifferent to him? Did it perhaps not heed him, not even perceive him? He had always fancied that trees and flowers had a species of sight, that they watched him, the

trees shyly out of their green foliage, the flowers with their bright unshrinking gaze. The tallest trees seemed to look down on him from a height, regarding him with a dignified and quiet interest; his personal affection for them had led him indeed to be careful not to ill-use them; he had always disliked the gathering of flowers, the tearing off of boughs or leaves from shrubs. They seemed to suffer injury patiently, but none the less did he think that they were hurt. He liked to touch the full-blown heads of the roses, when they yielded their petals at a touch into his hand, because it seemed that they gave themselves willingly. And then, too, when the big china bowl that stood in the hall was full of them, and they were mixed with spices, the embalming process seemed to give them a longer and a fuller life.

But now he was leaving all this; day after day the garden would bloom, until the autumn came, and the trees showered down their golden leaves on walk and lawn. He had seen it year after year, and now he would see it no more. Would they miss him as he would miss them? And so the last afternoon was to him a wistful valediction; he went softly about, to and fro, with a strange sadness at his heart, the first shadow of the leave-takings of the world.

The school to which he went was a big place

in the suburbs of London, standing near a royal park. The place was full of dignified houses, standing among trees and paddocks, with high blank garden-walls everywhere. The school itself had been once a great suburban mansion, the villa of a statesman. The rooms were large, high, and dignified, but the bareness of life, under the new conditions, was a great trial to the boy. He had a certain luxuriousness of temperament, not in matters of meat and drink, but in the surroundings and apparatus of life. The bare, uncurtained, uncarpeted rooms, the big dormitory with its cubicles, the stone-flagged passages, all appeared to him mean and sordid. His schoolmaster was a man of real force of character, a tall stately personage with a great enthusiasm for literature, a fine converser and teacher, and with a deep insight into character. But this was marred by a want of tenderness, a certain harshness of disposition, and a belief that boys needed to be repressed and dragooned. Hugh conceived an overwhelming terror for this majestic man, with the dress and bearing of a fine gentleman, with his flashing eyes, his thin lips, his grey curly hair, his straggling beard. He was a friend of Hugh's father, and took a certain interest in the boy, especially when he discovered that, though dreamy and forgetful, Hugh's abilities were

still of a high order. His work was, in fact, always easy to him, though he was entirely destitute of ambition. Certain scenes impressed themselves on the boy's mind with extraordinary vividness. Mr. Russell, the schoolmaster, used to read out every week a passage for the boys to turn into verse. He read finely, and Hugh noticed, with a curious surprise, that Mr. Russell was almost invariably affected to tears by his reading. But, on the other hand, a scene which he saw, when he and certain other boys were waiting to have their exercises looked over, was for years a kind of nightmare to him. There was a slow and stupid boy in the class, whom Mr. Russell chose to consider obstinate, and who was severely caned, in the presence of the others, for mistakes in his exercise. Even ten years after, Hugh could remember with a species of horror the jingling of the keys in Mr. Russell's pocket, as he took them out to unlock the drawer where the cane lay. Perhaps this proved a salutary lesson for Hugh, for the terror that such an incident might befall himself, caused him to take an amount of trouble with his exercises which he would certainly not otherwise have bestowed.

On Sunday evenings Mr. Russell read aloud to the upper boys in his drawing-room; and this was a happy time for Hugh; he loved to

sit in a deep chair, and feast his eyes upon the pictures, the china, the warm carpet and curtains of the fire-lit room, and the books that he heard read had a curious magic for him. Mr. Russell never seemed to take any particular notice of him, and Hugh used to feel that he was despised for his want of *savoir faire*, his slovenliness, his timidity; and it was a great surprise to discover, long after, a bundle of letters from Mr. Russell to his father, in which he found his abilities and shortcomings discussed with extraordinary penetration.

Hugh played no games at school; there was not then the organisation of school games which has since grown up. His favourite occupation was wandering about the big grounds, to which certain boys were admitted, or joining in the walks, which a dozen boys, conducted by a peevish or good-tempered usher, as the case might be, used to take in the neighbourhood of the school. The high garden-walls, with the mysterious posterns, the huge horse-chestnuts looking over, the leaded tops of the classical arbours with which the grounds of an adjacent villa were adorned; the great gate-posts of the main entrances, the school-house itself, looking grimly down from a great height,—all these held strange mysteries for the boy, sinking unconsciously into his spirit.

But he made very few friends either with masters or boys. He had none of the merry sociability of childhood; he confided in no one, he simply lived his life reluctantly, hating the place, never sure that some ugly and painful punishment, some ridicule or persecution might not fall on him out of a clear sky for some offence unconsciously committed. He had hardly a single pleasant memory connected with the school, except of certain afternoons when the boys who had done well for the week were allowed to go without supervision to the neighbouring shops, and purchase simple provender. But if he made no friends, he at least made no enemies; he was always friendly and good-tempered, and he was preserved by his solitariness from all grossness and evil. It was a big school, and occasionally he perceived in the talk and behaviour of his companions the signs of some ugly and obscene mystery that he did not understand, and that he had no wish to penetrate. But the result, which in after days surprised him with a sense of deep gratitude and thankfulness, was, that though he spent two years at this school, he left it with absolutely untainted innocence, such innocence as in later days he would have held to be almost inconceivable, as to all the darker temptations of the senses. But the absence of close human relationship was the

strange thing. He had a few boys with whom he associated in a familiar way. But he had no idea of the homes from which they came, he knew nothing of their inner taste and fancies. And though his own feelings and interests were definite enough and even strong, though he read books of all kinds with intense avidity, he never spoke of them to other boys, while at the same time he was averse to writing letters home; his father complained once during the holidays that he knew nothing of what the boy did at school. Hugh could not put into words what he felt to be the truth, namely, that he hardly knew himself. He submitted quietly and obediently to the dull routine of the place, and felt so little interest in it, that he could not conceive his father could do so either. There were of course occasional exciting incidents, but to relate them would have required so much explanation, such a list of personages, such a description of circumstances, that he felt unable to embark upon it. His father asked him whether he would not like some of his school friends to visit him at home, and he rejected the suggestion with a kind of incredulous horror. The thought of invading the sanctity, the familiarity of home, with the presence of a boy who might reveal its secrets to others, was too appalling to face; it hardly occurred to him that the

boys had homes of their own, places which they loved. He only thought of them as figures on the school stage, to be conciliated, tolerated, lived with, his only preoccupation being to shield and guard his own heart and inner life from any intruding influence whatever. He had no desire ever to see one of the crew again, boys or masters. Some indeed were preferable to others, but no one could be trusted for an instant; the only safe course was to make no claim, and to shield one's self as far as possible against all external influences, all alliances, all relationships.

Hugh, in after life, could hardly recall the faces of any of his companions; the only way at the time in which he differentiated them to himself was that some looked kinder than others—that was the only thing that mattered. Thus the years dragged themselves along, the school-time hated with an intensity of dislike, the holidays eagerly welcomed as a return to old pursuits. The boy used to lie awake in a big dormitory in the early summer mornings, thinking with vague terror and disquiet of the ordered day of labour that lay before him. There were peacocks kept in the grounds whose shrill feminine screams of despairing reproach were always inseparably connected with the dreariness of the place. His last morning

at the school he awoke early, full of joyful excitement, and heard the familiar cries with a thankful sense that he would never hear them again. He said no good-byes, made no farewell visits. He waved his hand, as he drove away, in merry derision at the grim high windows that looked down on the road, the only thought in his mind being the feeling of unconquerable relief that the place would see him no more.

He used to wonder, in after days, whether this could not have been avoided; whether it was a wholesome discipline for a child of his age and perhaps peculiar temperament to have been brought up under these conditions. After all, it is the case of the average boy that has to be considered, and for the average boy, insouciant, healthy-minded, boisterous, there is probably little doubt that the barrack-life of school has its value. Probably too for Hugh himself, though it did not in any way develop his intellect or his temperament, it had a real value. It taught him a certain self-reliance; it showed him that what was disagreeable was not necessarily intolerable. What Hugh needed to make him effective was a certain touch of the world, a certain hardness, which his home life did not tend to develop. And thus this bleak and uncheered episode of life gave him a super-

ficial ordinariness, and taught him the need of conventional compliance with the ways of the mysterious, uninteresting world.

III

THE change was accomplished, and Hugh went to a public school. In later life, conscious as he became of the strain and significance of personal relations with others, he used to wonder at the careless indifference with which he had entered the big place which was to be his home for several years, and was to leave so deep a mark upon him. In his mature life, in the case of the official positions he was afterwards to hold, unimportant though they were, the thought of his relations to those with whom he was to work, the necessity of adapting himself to their temperaments, of establishing terms of intercourse with them, used to weigh on his mind for many days before the work began. But here, he reflected, where life was lived on so much closer terms, when the words and deeds, the feelings and fancies of the boys, among whom he was to live, were of the deepest and most vital importance, he entered upon the new life, dull and careless, without interest or excitement, simply going because he was sent, just dumbly desirous of ease and tran-

quillity. He had been elected on to the foundation of an ancient school, and the surroundings of the new place did indeed vaguely affect him with a sort of solemn pleasure. The quaint mediæval chambers; the cloisters, with their dark and mysterious doorways; the hall, with its high timbered roof and stained glass; the huge Tudor chapel, with its pure white soaring lines; the great organ, the rich stall-work, and the beautiful fields with their great elms—all this gave him a dim delight. He was taken to school by his father, who was full of affection, hope, and anxiety. But it seemed to Hugh, with the curiously observant power that he always possessed, though he could not have put it into words, that his father, rather than himself, was experiencing the emotion that it would have been appropriate for him to have felt. His father was disappointed that Hugh did not seem more conscious of membership, of the dignity and greatness of the place. His tender care about the books, the pictures, and the furnishing of Hugh's little room, did indeed move the boy to a certain gratitude. But his father's way on such occasions was to order what he himself would have liked, and his taste was severe; and then he demanded that the boy should not only accept, but enthusiastically like, what was given him. Hugh's immature

taste was all for what was bright and fanciful; his father's for what was grave and dignified; and thus though the boy was glad to have pictures of his own, he had rather that they had not been engravings of old religious pictures; and he would have preferred dainty china objects, such as candlesticks and ornaments, to the solid metal fittings which his father gave him. When they parted, his father gave him a serious exhortation to which the child hardly listened. He set him on his guard against certain temptations, when Hugh was ignorant of what he was alluding to; and the emotion with which the boy took leave of his father was rather envy that he was returning to the dear home life, than regret at being parted from him.

The first two years of the boy's school life passed like a bewildered dream; he had a companion or two, but hardly a friend; he had little idea of what was going on in the big place round him; he was not in the least ambitious of distinction either in work or games; his one desire was not to be conspicuous in any way. He was now a shy, awkward creature; but he was good-humoured enough, and as his performances excited no envy in any of his companions, he was left to a great extent to his own devices. The masters with whom he was brought into contact

he regarded with a distant awe; it never occurred to him that they took any interest in their work or in the characters of the boys they dealt with. He supposed vaguely that they liked to show their power by scoring under the mistakes in exercises, and by setting punishments. But they were all dim and inhuman beings to him. Only very gradually did it dawn upon the boy that he had a place in a big society. He was habitually unsuccessful in examinations, but he became a proficient in football, which gave him a certain small consequence. He began to give thought to his clothes, and to adopt the customary tone of talk, not because he felt in sympathy with it, but because it was a convenient shield under which he could pursue his own ideas. But his tastes were feeble enough; he spent hours in the great school library, a cool panelled room, and though he had no taste for anything that was hard or vigorous, he read an immense amount of poetry and fiction. He began, too, to write poetry, with extraordinary precautions that his occupation should not be discovered. He was present on one occasion when a store of poems, the work of a curious and eccentric boy of his own age, was discovered in the drawer of a bureau. These were solemnly read aloud by a small tormentor, while the unhappy author, writhing with shame and

misery, was firmly held in a chair, and each composition received with derisive comments and loud laughter. Hugh had joined, he remembered with a sense of self-reproach, in the laughter and the criticisms, though he felt in his heart both interest in and admiration for the poems. But he dare not so far brave ridicule as to express his feelings, and simply fell tamely and ungenerously, into the general tone. He did indeed make feeble overtures afterwards to the author, which were suspiciously and fiercely repelled, and the only practical lesson that Hugh learned from the scene was to conceal his own literary experiments with a painful caution.

But as the years passed there came a new influence into Hugh's life. He had always been observant, in his quiet way, of other boys, and at last, as his nature developed, he began to idealise them in a romantic way. The first object of his admiration was a boy much older than himself, an independent, graceful creature, who had a strong taste for beautiful things, and adorned his room with china and pictures; he was moreover a contributor of verses to the school magazine, which seemed to Hugh models of elegance and grace. But he was far too shy to think of attracting the notice of his hero. It simply became an intense preoccupa-

tion to watch him, in chapel or hall; it was a fearful joy to meet him, and he used to invent excuses for passing his room, till he knew the very ornaments and pictures by sight. That room seemed to him a kind of sacred shrine, where a bright being lived a life of high and lofty intellectual emotion. But he never succeeded in exchanging a word with the object of his admiration, except on a certain day, marked in his calendar long after with letters of gold. There was a regatta in the neighbourhood of the school, to which the boys were allowed to go under certain conditions. He had gone, and had spent his day in wandering about alone, until the glare and the crowd had brought on a headache; and he had resolved to return home by an early train. He went to the station, hoping that he might be unobserved, and stepped into an empty carriage. Just as the train started, he heard rapid steps; the door was flung open, and his hero entered. Seeing a junior boy of his own house in the carriage, he made some good-natured remark, and before Hugh could realise the greatness of his good fortune, his hero had sat down beside him, and after a few words, with a friendly impulse, had launched into a ghost story which lasted the whole of the journey, and the very phrases of which haunted Hugh's mind for weeks. They had walked

down from the station together, but alas for the vicissitudes of human affairs, his god, contented with having shown courteous kindness to a lonely and uninteresting small boy, never gave him for the rest of the school term, after which he left, the slightest sign of recognition ; and yet for years after the fields and trees and houses which they had passed on the line were suffused for Hugh with a subtle emotion in the memory of that journey.

And then, a little later than this, Hugh had the first and perhaps the most abiding joy of his life. A clever, ambitious, active boy of his own standing, whom he had long secretly admired, took a pronounced fancy to him. He was a boy, Hugh saw afterwards, with a deeply jealous disposition ; and the first attraction of Hugh's friendship had been the fact that Hugh threatened his supremacy in no department whatever. Hugh was the only boy of the set who had never done better than he in anything. But then there came in a more generous feeling. Hugh's heart awoke ; there was nothing which it was not a pleasure to do for his friend. He would put anything aside, at any moment, to walk, to talk, to discharge little businesses, to fetch and carry, to be in attendance. Moreover, Hugh found his tongue, but his anxiety to retain his friend's affection made him astonish-

ingly tactful and discreet. He was always ready to sympathise, to enter into any suggestion; he suppressed himself and his own tastes completely and utterly; and he found, too, to his vast delight, that he could be entertaining and amusing. The books he had read, the fiction with which he had crammed himself, his keen eye for idiosyncrasies and absurdities, all came to his assistance, and he was amply repaid by a smile for his trouble.

The two boys became inseparable, and perhaps the thing that made those days of companionship bright with a singular and golden brightness, was that there was in his friend the same fastidious vein, the same dislike of any coarseness of talk or thought which was strong in Hugh. Looking back on his school life, with all the surprising foulness of the talk of even high-principled boys, it was a deep satisfaction to Hugh to reflect that there had never been in the course of this friendship a single hint, so far as he could recollect, in their own intercourse with each other, of the existence of evil. They had tacitly ignored it, and yet there had not been the least priggishness about the relationship. They had never inquired about each other's aspirations or virtues, in the style of sentimental school-books. They had never said a word of religion, nor had there ever been the

smallest expression of sentiment. All that was taken for granted. It was indeed one of those perfect, honest, wholesome companionships, which can only exist between two cheerful boys of the same age. Hugh indeed was conscious of a depth of sacred emotion, too sacred to be spoken of to any one, even to be expressed to himself. It was not, in fact, a definite relation which he represented to himself; it was rather like a new light shed abroad over his life; incidents had a savour, a sharp outline which they had lacked before. He became conscious, too, of the movement and intermingling of personal forces, of characters. He no longer had the purely spectatorial observation of others which had distinguished him before, but beheld other personalities, as in a mirror, in the mind of his friend. And then, too, what was a far deeper joy, literature and poetry began to yield up their secrets to him. Poetry had been to him before, a gracious, soulless thing like a tree or a flower, and had been apprehended purely in its external aspect. But now he suddenly saw the emotion that burned beneath, not indeed of the love that is mingled with desire—that had still no meaning for the soul of the boy, or only the significance of a far-off mystery; but he perceived for the first time that it was indeed possible to hold something dearer than one's self, one's country,

one's school, one's friend—something large and strong, that could intervene between one's hopes and one's self.

Hugh was indeed not yet, if ever, to learn the force of these large words—patriotism, honour, self-surrender, public spirit; he remained an individualist to the end. His country never became to him the glowing reality that it means for some. It was dear because his friends, who were also Englishmen, were dear; and his school for the same reason. If he had a friend in the School Eleven, Hugh would always rather that his friend should be distinguished than that the school should win. He could not disentangle the personal fibre, or conceive of an institution, a society, apart from the beings of which it was composed.

But his friendship broke in pieces, once and for all, the dumb isolation in which he had hitherto lived. It opened for him the door of a larger and finer life, and his soul, endowed with a new elasticity, seemed to leap, to run, to climb, with a freshness and vigour that he had never before so much as guessed at.

The closeness of this friendship gradually loosened—or rather the exclusive companionship of its earlier stages grew less; but it seemed to Hugh to bring him into new relations with half the world. He became a boy with

many friends. Other boys found his quaint humour, his shrewd perceptions, his courtesy and gentleness attractive. He took his new-found popularity with a quiet prudence, a good-humoured discretion that disarmed the most critical; but it was deeply delightful to the boy; he seemed to himself to have passed out of the shadow into the sun and air. Life appeared to be full of gracious secrets, delightful emotions, excellent surprises; it became a series of small joyful discoveries. His intellect responded to the stimulus, and he became aware that he had, in certain directions, a definite ability of which he had never suspected himself. The only part of his nature that was as yet dark and sealed was the religious spirit. In a world so full of interests and beauties, there was no room for God; and at this period of his life, Hugh, with a blindness which afterwards amazed him, grew to think of God in the same way that he unconsciously thought of his father, as a checking and disapproving influence, not to be provoked, but equally not to be trusted. Hugh had no confidences with his father; he never felt sure, if he gave way to easy and unconstrained talk with him, that his father would not suddenly discern something of levity and frivolity in his pursuits; and this developed in Hugh a gentle hypocrisy, that was indeed

the shadow of his sympathy, which made him divine what would please his father to talk about. He found all his old letters after his father's death, arranged and docketed—the thought of the unexpected tenderness which had prompted this care filled his eyes with sudden tears—but how unreal they seemed! There was nothing of himself in them, though they were written with a calculated easiness of expression which made him feel ashamed.

And it was ever the same with his idea of God. He never thought of Him as the giver of beautiful things, as the inspirer of happy friendships; he rather regarded Him as the liberal dispenser of disappointments, of rainy days, of reproofs, of failures. It was natural enough in a place like a public school, where the masters set the boys an example of awkward reticence on serious matters. Even Hugh's housemaster, a conscientious, devoted man, who, in the time of expansion, was taken into the circle of his sincere friendships—even he never said a serious word to the boy, except with a constrained and official air as though he heartily disliked the subject.

It is no part of this slender history to trace the outer life of Hugh Neville. It must suffice to say that, by the time that he rose to the top of the school, he appeared a wholesome, manly,

dignified boy, quiet and unobtrusive; very few suspected him of taking anything but a simple and conventional view of the scheme of things; and indeed Hugh's view at this time was, if not exactly conventional, at least unreflective. It was his second time of harvest. He had gathered in, in his childhood, a whole treasure of beautiful and delicate impressions of nature. Now he cared little for nature, except as a quiet background for the drama which was proceeding, and which absorbed all his thoughts. What he was now garnering was impressions of personalities and characters, the odd perversities that often surprisingly revealed themselves, the strange generosities and noblenesses that sometimes made themselves felt. But an English public school is hardly a place where these larger and finer qualities reveal themselves, though they are indeed often there. The whole atmosphere is one of decorum, authority, subordination. Introspection is disregarded and even suppressed. To be active, good-humoured, sensible, is the supreme development. Hugh indeed got nothing but good out of his school days; the simple code of the place gave him balance and width of view, and the conventionality which is the danger of these institutions never soaked into his mind; convention was indeed for him like a suit of

bright polished armour, in which he moved about like a youthful knight. He left school curiously immature in many ways. He had *savoir faire* enough and mild literary interests, but of hard intellectual robustness he had nothing. The studies of the place were indeed not of a nature to encourage it. The most successful boys were graceful triflers with ancient literatures; to write a polished and vapid poem of Latin verse was Hugh's highest accomplishment, and he possessed the power of reading, with moderate facility, both Latin and Greek; add to this a slender knowledge of ancient history, a slight savour of mathematics, and a few vague conceptions of science; such was the dainty intellectual equipment with which he prepared to do battle with the great world. But for all that he knew something of the art of dealing with men. He had learned to obey and to command, to be deferential to authority and to exact due obedience, and he had too a priceless treasure of friendship, of generous emotion, untinged with sentimentality, that threw a golden light back upon the tall elms, the ancient towers, the swiftly-running stream. It was to come back to him in later years, in reveries both bitter and sweet, how inexpressibly dear the place had been to him; indeed when

he left his school, it had simply transmuted itself into his home,—the Rectory, with its trees and walks, its narrower circle of interests, having faded quite into the background.

The last morning at school was filled with a desolation that was almost an anguish; he had packed, had distributed presents, had said a number of farewells, each thrilled with a passionate hope that he would not be quite forgotten, but that he might still claim a little part in the place, in the hearts so dear to him. He lay awake half the night, and in the dawn he rose and put his curtain aside, and looked out on the old buttresses of the chapel, the mellow towers of the college, all in a clear light of infinite brightness and freshness. He could not restrain his tears, and went back to his bed shaken with sobs, yet aware that it was a luxurious sorrow; it was not sorrow for misspent days; there were carelessnesses and failures innumerable, but no dark shadows of regret; it was rather the thought that the good time was over, that he had not realised, as it sped away, how infinitely sweet it had been, and the thought that it was indeed over and done with, the page closed, the flower faded, the song silent pierced the very core of his heart. One more last thrill of intense emotion was his; his carriage, as he drove away, surmounted the bridge

over the stream; the old fields with the silent towers behind them lay beneath him, the home of a hundred memories. There was hardly a yard of it all that he could not connect with some little incident; the troubles, the unhappinesses, such as they had been, were gone like a shadow; only the joy remained; and the memory of those lost joys seemed like a bird beating its wings in the clear air, as it flew to the shadow of the pines. What was to follow? He cared little to think; all his mind was bent on the sweet past. Something of the mystery of life came home to him in that moment. He would have readily died then, he felt, if a wish could have brought him death. Yet there was nothing morbid in the thought; it was only that death seemed for a moment a fitting consummation for the end of a period that had held a richness and joy that nothing else could ever hold again.

IV

THE desire to be returning to school with which Hugh went up to the university did not last long; he paid a visit to his housemaster, and saw with a mixture of envy and amusement how his juniors had all stepped quietly into places which he and his friends had vacated, and were enjoying the sensation of influence and activity. He was courteously treated and even welcomed; but he felt all the time like the *revenante* of Christina Rossetti,—"I was of yesterday." And then, too, a few weeks after he had settled at Cambridge, in spite of the strangeness of it all, in spite of the humiliation of being turned in a moment from a person of dignity and importance into a mere "freshman," he realised that the freedom of the life, as compared with the barrack-life of school, was irresistibly attractive. He had to keep two or three engagements in the day, and even about these there was great elasticity. The independence, the liberty, the kindliness of it all, came home to him with immense charm. And then, too, the city full of mediæval palaces, the quiet

dignity, the incomparable beauty of everything gave him a deep though partly unconscious satisfaction. But for the first year he was merely a big schoolboy in mind. The real change in his mental history dated from his election to a small society which met weekly, where a paper was read, and a free discussion followed. Up to this time Hugh's religion had been of a purely orthodox and sensuous description. He had grown up in an ecclesiastical atmosphere, and the ritual of church services, the music, the ceremonial, had been all attractive to him. As for the dogmatic side, he had believed it unquestioningly, just as he had believed in the history or the science that had been taught him. But in this society he met young men—and older men too, for several of the Dons were members—who were rationalists, materialists, and definitely sceptical. It dawned on his mind for the first time that, while all other sciences were of a deductive kind, endeavouring to approach principles from the observation and classification of phenomena, from the scrutiny of evidence, that theology was a science based on intuitions, and dependent on assumptions which it was impossible to test scientifically. The first effect of this was to develop a great loyalty to his traditions, and almost the first hard thinking he had ever done was in the

direction of attempting to defend his faith on scientific principles. But the attempt proved fruitless; one by one his cherished convictions were washed away, though he never owned it, not even to himself. He was regarded as a model of orthodoxy. He made friends with a young Fellow of his college, who was an advanced free-thinker and set himself to enlighten the undergraduate, whose instinctive sympathy gave him a charm for older men, of which he was entirely unconscious. They had many serious talks on the subject; and his friend employed a kind of gentle irony in undermining as far as he could the foundations of what seemed to him so irrational a state of mind. One particular conversation Hugh remembered as vividly as he remembered anything. He and his friend had been sitting, on one hot June day, in the college garden, then arrayed in all its mid-summer pomp. They sat near a great syringa bush, the perfume of which shrub in later years always brought back the scene before him; overhead, among the boughs of a lime-tree, a thrush fluted now cheerfully, now pathetically, like one who was testing a gift of lyrical improvisation. The elder man, wearied by a hard term's work, displayed a certain irritability of argument. Hugh held tenaciously to his points; and at last, after a silence, his

friend turned to him and said: "Well, after all, it reduces itself to this: you have an interior witness to the truth of what you say, which you can honestly hold to be superior to the exterior evidences of its improbability?" Hugh smiled uneasily, and, conscious that he was saying something which he hoped rather than knew, said, "I think I have." The older man shrugged his shoulders and said, "Then I can say no more!"—nor did he ever again revert to the question, from what Hugh thought was a real generosity and tenderness of spirit.

All the time Hugh practised a species of emotional religion, attending the chapel services devoutly, even willingly hearing sermons. There was a little dark church, in a tiny courtyard hemmed in by houses and approached by a narrow passage, served by a Fellow of a neighbouring college, who preached gentle devotional discourses on Sunday evenings, to which many undergraduates used to go. These were a great help to Hugh, because they transferred religion from the intellectual to the spiritual region; and thus, though he was gradually made aware of the weakness of his intellectual position, he continued his religious life, in the hope that the door of a mystery might some day be opened to him, and that he might arrive, by an inner process, at a conviction which his intellect

could not give him. But here as elsewhere he was swayed by a species of timidity and caution. While on the one hand his intellect told him that there was no sure and incontrovertible standing-ground for the orthodoxy which he professed, yet, on the other hand, he could not bear to relinquish the chance that certainty might be found on different lines.

In the middle of these speculations, he suffered a dark experience. He fell for the first time in his life into ill-health. His vitality and nervous force were great, and though soon depleted were soon recuperated ; but the new and ardent interests of the university had appealed to him on many sides ; he worked hard, took violent exercise, and filled up every space of time with conversation and social enjoyment; he had no warning of the strain, except an unaccustomed weariness, of which he made light, drawing upon his nervous energy to sustain him; the wearier he grew, the more keenly he flung himself into whatever interested him, learning, as he thought, that the way to conquer lassitude was by increased exertions, the feeling of fatigue always passing off when he once grew absorbed in a subject. He took to sitting up late and rising early, and he had never seemed to himself more alert and vigorous in mind, when the collapse came. He

was suddenly attacked, without warning, by insomnia.

One night he went to bed late, and found it difficult to sleep; thoughts raced through his brain, scenes and images forming and reforming with inconceivable rapidity; at last he fell asleep, to awake an hour or two later in an intolerable agony of mind. His heart beat thick and fast, and a shapeless horror seemed to envelop him. He struck a light and tried to read, but a ghastly and poisonous fear of he knew not what seemed to clutch at his mind. At last he fell into a broken sleep; but when he rose in the morning, he knew that some mysterious evil had befallen him. If he had been older and wiser, he would have gone at once to some sensible physician, and a short period of rest would probably have restored him; but the suffering appeared to be of so purely mental a character that he did not realise how much of it was physical. For that day and for many days he wrestled with a fierce blackness of depression, which gradually concentrated itself upon his religious life; he became possessed by a strong delusion that it was a punishment sent to him by God for tampering with freedom of thought, and little by little a deep moral anxiety took hold of him. He

searched the recesses of his heart, and ended by painting his whole life in the blackest of colours.

In the endeavour to find some degree of peace, he read the Scriptures constantly, and the marks he made in his Bible against verses which seemed to hold out hope to him or to plunge him into despair, remained through the after years as signs of this strange conflict of mind. His distress was infinitely increased by attending some services at a mission which then happened to be proceeding which, instead of inspiring him with hope, convinced him that his case was past recovery. For some weeks he tasted, day by day, the dreary bitterness of the cup of dark and causeless depression, and laboured under an agonising dejection of spirit. This intensity of suffering seemed to shake his whole life to its foundation. It made havoc of his work, of his friendships, of the easy philosophy of his life. He began to learn the distressing necessity of dissembling his feelings; he endeavoured at great cost to bear as unconcerned a part as before in simple festivities and gatherings, while the clouds gathered and the thunder muttered in his soul. And all the time the answer never came. Wrestle as he might, there seemed to him an impenetrable barrier between him and the golden light of God. He learned in what dark and cold

isolation it is possible for the soul to wander. Slowly, very slowly, the outlook brightened; a whole range of new emotions opened before him. The expressions of suffering and sorrow, that had seemed to him before but touching and beautiful phrases, became clear and vivid. His own powers of expression became more subtle and rich. And thus, though he gradually drifted back into a species of spiritual epicureanism, he always felt grateful for his sojourn in the dark world. He did not abandon his religious profession, but he became more content to suspend his judgment. He saw dimly that the mistake he had made was in hoping for anything of the nature of certainty. He became indeed aware that the only persons who are indubitably in error are those who make up their minds in early life to a theory about God and the world, and who from that moment admit no evidence into their minds except the evidence that supports their view. Hugh saw that life must be, for him at all events, a pilgrimage, in which, so long as his open-mindedness, his candour, his enthusiasm did not desert him, there were endless lessons to be learned by the way. And thus he came back gratefully and wearily to his old life, his old friendships. His college became to him a very blessed place; apart from the

ordinary social life, from the work and the games which formed a background and framework in which relationships were set, he found a new region of desires, impulses, ideas, through which he wandered at his will.

At this time Hugh could not be said to be happy. The shadows of his dark moods often hung about him, and he bore in his face the traces of his suffering. He felt, too, that he had failed in his religious quest, though side by side with this was the consciousness that he had been meant to fail. His religious views were a vague theism, coupled with a certain tendency to determinism, to which his wanderings had conducted him. Christian determinism he called it, because, though his old unquestioning view of the historical evidences of Christianity had practically disappeared, yet his belief in Christian morality as the highest system that had yet appeared in the world was unshaken. And it was at this time, just after taking his degree, that he wrote a little book, a species of imaginary biography which attained, to his surprise, a certain vogue. The book was an extraordinarily formless and irrelevant production, written upon no plan, into which he shovelled all his vague speculations upon life. But its charm was its ingenuous youthfulness and emotional sincerity ; and, although he

afterwards came to dislike the thought of the book so much, that at a later date he bought up and destroyed all the copies of it that remained unsold, yet for all that it had the value of being a perfectly sincere revelation of personality, and represented a real, if a sentimental, experience. The book was severely reviewed, but as it was published anonymously this gave Hugh little anxiety; and so he shouldered his burden, and went out of the sheltered life into the wilderness of the world.

V

THERE will be no attempt made here to trace in any detail the monotonous years of Hugh's professional life, because they seemed to him to have been in one sense lost years; there was at all events no conscious growth in his soul. His spirit seemed to him afterwards to have lain, during those years, like a worm in a cocoon, living a blind life. Externally, indeed, they were the busiest time of his life. He became a hard-worked official in the Civil Service. He lived in rooms in London. He spent his day at the office, he composed innumerable documents, he wrote endless letters; he seemed to himself, in a way, to be useful; he did not dislike the work, and he found it interesting to have to get up some detailed case, and to present it as lucidly as possible. He began his official life with an intention of doing some sort of literary work as well; but he found himself incapable of any sustained effort. Still, he continued to write; he did a good deal of reviewing, and kept a voluminous diary, in which he

scribbled anything that struck him, recording scenes, conversations, impressions of books and people. This he found was easy enough, but it seemed impossible to complete anything or to give it a finished form. However, he acquired the habit of writing, and gained some facility of expression. His short holidays were spent either in travel, with some like-minded companion, or in his quiet country home, where he read a large number of books, and lived much in the open air. But his progress seemed to have been purely intellectual. He lost his interest in abstract problems and in religious matters, which retired to a remote distance, and appeared to him to be little more than a line of blue hills on a distant horizon, as seen by a man who goes up and down in a city. He had visited them once, those hills of hope, and he used to think vaguely of visiting them again; but meanwhile the impulse and the opportunity alike failed him.

Yet in another sense he did not consider those days lost. He gained, he used to feel afterwards, a knowledge of the world, a knowledge of men, a knowledge of affairs. This contact with realities took from his somewhat dreamy and reflective temperament its unpractical quality. If he chose afterwards to leave what is commonly called the world, it was a deliberate choice, founded on a thorough knowledge

of its conditions, and not upon a timid and awkward ignorance. He did not leave the world because it frightened or bewildered him, but because he did not find in it the things of which he was in search. Neither, on the other hand, did he quit the life of affairs like a weakling or an inefficient person who had failed in it and had persuaded himself that incompetence was unworldliness. Hugh became a remarkably efficient official, alert, sensible, practical, and prudent. He was marked out for promotion. He was looked upon as a man who got on well with inferiors and superiors alike, who could be trusted to do a complicated piece of business well, who was worth consulting.

Moreover he acquired a very serviceable and lucid style, a power of clear statement, which afterwards stood him in good stead. His official work gave him the power of seeing the point, it gave him an economy of words, an effective briskness and solidity of presentment; at the same time his literary work prevented him from degenerating into a mere précis-writer.

It is very difficult to say which of the days of a man's life are wasted and which are fruitful. It is not necessarily the days in which a man gives himself up to his chosen work in which he makes most progress. Sometimes a long inarticulate period, when there seems to a man to

be a dearth of ideas, a mental drought, acts as a sort of incubation in which a thought is slowly conceived and perfected. Sometimes a long period of repression stores force at high pressure. The lean years are often the prelude, even the cause, of the years of fatness, when the exhausted and overteemed earth has lain fallow and still, storing its vital juices.

Sometimes, too, a disagreeable duty, undertaken in heaviness and faithfully fulfilled, rewards one by an increase of mental strength and agility. A painful experience which seems to drown a man's whole nature in depression and sadness, to cloud hope and eagerness alike, can be seen in retrospect to have been a period fertile in patience and courage.

Hugh did not find his official life depressing, but very much the reverse. He enjoyed dealing with affairs and with men. He used sometimes to wonder, half regretfully, half comfortably, at the fading of his old dreams, in which so much that was beautiful was mingled with so much that was uneasy. He began indeed to be somewhat impatient of sentiment and emotion, and to think with a sort of compassion of those who allowed themselves to be ruled by such motives. He did not exactly adopt a conventional standard, but he found it easier to live on a conventional plane, until he

even began to be viewed by some of his old friends as a man who had adopted a conventional view. Hugh indeed found, in his official life, that the majority of those among whom his lot was cast did seem whole-heartedly content to live in a conventional world and enjoy conventional successes. Such men, and they were numerous, never seemed disposed to probe beneath the surface of things, unless they were confronted by adverse circumstances, bereavements, or indifferent health; and, under these conditions, their one aim seemed to be to escape as soon as possible from the region of discomfort: they viewed reflection as a sort of symptom of failing vitality. And so Hugh drifted to a certain extent into feeling that self-questioning and abstract thought were a species of intellectual ill-health. One arrived at no solution, any more than one did in the case of a toothache; the one thing to do was to get rid of the unsatisfactory conditions as swiftly as possible.

During this period of his life Hugh made many acquaintances, but no great friends. In fact the idea of close and intimate relationship with others fell more and more into the background; he became interested rather in the superficial and spectatorial aspect of things and persons. He began to see how differences of

character and temperament played into each other, and formed a resultant which merged itself in the slow current of affairs. But he seemed to himself to be acquiring and sorting tangible experiences, and to have little speculative interest at all; he neither craved to make or to receive confidences. The hours not occupied by business were given to social life and to reading; and he was, or fancied himself to be, perfectly contented.

But as the years went on, instead of sinking into purely conventional ways, Hugh found a mood of dissatisfaction growing upon him. He found that after his holidays he came back with increasing reluctance to his work. The work itself, how unsatisfactory it became! Half the time and energy of the office seemed to be spent on creating rather than performing work; an immense amount of detail seemed to be entirely useless, and to cumber rather than to assist the conduct of the business that was important. Of course much of it was necessary work which had to be done by some one; but Hugh began to wonder whether his life was well bestowed in carrying out a system of which so much seemed to consist in dealing with unimportant minutiæ, and in amassing immense records of things that deserved only to be forgotten. He found himself reflecting

that life was short, and that he tended to spend the greater part of his waking hours in matters that were essentially trivial. He began to question whether there was any duty for him in the matter at all, and by what law, human or divine, a man was bound to spend his days in work in the usefulness of which he did not wholly believe.

Living, as he did, an inexpensive life of great simplicity, he had contrived to save a certain amount of money, and he was surprised to find how fast it accumulated. When he had been some fifteen years in his office, a great-uncle of his died, leaving Hugh quite unexpectedly a sum of a few thousand pounds, which, together with his savings, gave him a small but secure competence, as large, in fact, as the income he was accustomed to spend.

Even so, he did not at once decide to leave his official career. It seemed to him at first that the abandonment of a chosen profession ought not to depend upon the fact that one could live independently without it; he felt that there ought to be a better reason for pursuing a certain course of life than mere livelihood. But his accession of means enabled Hugh to give up all literary hack-work, such as reviewing, which had long been somewhat of a burden to him; he had found himself of late agreeing more and more

with William Morris's doctrine, that there was something degrading in a man's printing his opinions about other persons' books for money; and he now began to indulge in more ambitious literary schemes. This involved him in a good deal of reading; but he found himself thwarted at every turn by the pressure of official business. He found that his reading had to be done over and over again; that he would master a section of his subject, and then for lack of time be compelled to put it aside, until it had passed out of his mind and needed to be recovered.

At last he made up his mind that he would take the first obvious opportunity that offered itself to end his official work. It came in the form of an offer which, a year or two before, would have gratified his ambition, and which would have bound him without question to official work for the rest of his active life; he was offered in very complimentary terms the headship of a newly created department. He not only declined it, to the surprise and disappointment of his chief, but he resigned his appointment at the same time. He had a somewhat painful interview with the head of the office, who told him that he was sacrificing a brilliant and honourable career at the very moment when it was opening before him. Hugh did not, however, hesitate; he found it a difficult task to explain to his superior ex-

actly what he intended to do, who expressed a good-humoured contempt for the idea of making a mild literary experiment, at an age when literary success seemed unattainable. The great man, indeed, one of whose virtues was an easy frankness, said that it seemed to him as absurd as if Hugh had expressed the intention of devoting the rest of his life to practising the piano or drawing in water-colours. Hugh was quite aware that his literary position was of a dilettante kind, and that he had done nothing to justify the hope that success in literature was within his reach. He pleaded that the service of the State was encumbered by a mass of unnecessary detail, in the usefulness of which he did not believe. The Secretary said that of course there was a good deal of drudgery, but that the same applied to most lives of practical usefulness; and he pointed out that by accepting the new appointment, Hugh would be set free to attend to work of a more original and important kind. But Hugh felt himself sustained by a curiously inflexible determination, for which he could not wholly account; he merely said that he had considered the question in all its bearings, and that his mind was made up; upon which the Secretary shrugged his shoulders, and said that he did not wish to over-persuade him; and that indeed, if Hugh accepted the new post merely in

deference to persuasion, it would be good neither for himself nor the service. He added a few conventional words to the effect that the office would be sorry to lose so courteous and competent an official; and Hugh recognised that his chief, with the instinct of a thoroughly practical man, had dismissed him from his thoughts, as an entirely fantastic and wrong-headed person.

His retirement was not unattended by pain; he found that the announcement of his departure aroused more surprise and sorrow among his colleagues than he had expected; it was depressing, too, to say good-bye to the well-known faces, the familiar rooms, the routine that formed so substantial a part of his life. But he found in himself a wholly unanticipated courage, and even a secret glee at the prospect of his release, which revealed to him how congenial it was. He cleared up the accumulations of years; he made his adieus with much real emotion; yet it was a solemn rather than a sad moment when he put his papers away for the last time, and handed over the keys of the familiar boxes to his successor. He went slowly down the stairs alone, and stopped at the door to say good-bye to the old attendant, whom he never remembered to have seen absent from his place. The old man said, "Well, sir, I did think as you would not have left us yet."

Hugh replied, smiling, "Well, we have all to move on when our time comes, and I hope I leave only friends behind me." The old man seemed much affected by this, and said, 'Yes, sir, we shall be glad to see you whenever you can look in upon us"—and then with much fumbling drew out and presented a small pen-wiper to Hugh, which he had made with his own hands—"and God bless you, sir!" he added, with an apology for the liberty he was taking. This was the only incident in his leave-taking which affected Hugh to tears; but they were tears of emotion, not of regret. He was looking on to the new life, and not back to the old; and as he went out into the foggy air, and along the familiar pavement, there was nothing in his heart that called him back. He was grateful for all the kindness and affection of his friends, and the thought that he held a place in their hearts. What he hoped, he hardly knew; but the release from the burden of the tedious and useless work was like that which Christian experienced, when the burden rolled from his back into the grave that stood in the bottom, and he saw it no more.

VI

One of the best things that Hugh's professional life had brought him was a friendship with his father; their relations had been increasingly tense all through the undergraduate days; if Hugh had not been of a superficially timorous temperament, disliking intensely the atmosphere of displeasure, disapproval, or misunderstanding, among those with whom he lived, there would probably have been sharp collisions. His father did not realise that the boy was growing up; active and vigorous himself, he felt no diminution of energy, no sense of age, and he forgot that the relations of the home circle were insensibly altering. He took an intense interest in his son's university career, but interfered with his natural liberty, expecting him to spend all his vacations at home, and discouraging visits to houses of which he did not approve. He was very desirous that Hugh should ultimately take orders, and was nervously anxious that he should come under no sceptical influences. The result was that Hugh

simply excluded his father from his confidence, telling him nothing except the things of which he knew he would approve, and never asking his advice about matters on which he felt at all keenly; because he knew that his father would tend to attempt to demolish, with a certain bitterness and contempt, the speculations in which he indulged, and would be shocked and indignant at the mere beckoning of ideas which Hugh found to be widely entertained even by men whom he respected greatly. His father's faith indeed, subtle and even beautiful as it was, was built upon axioms which it seemed to him a kind of puerile perversity to deny. Religion came to him in definite and traditional channels, and to seek it in other directions appeared to him a species of wanton profanity.

The result was an entire divergence of thought, of which Hugh was fully conscious; but it did not seem to him that there was anything to be gained by candid avowal. He was at one with his father in the essential doctrines of Christianity; and being by nature of a speculative turn, he considered the discrimination of religious truth, the criticism of religious tradition, to be rather a stimulating and agreeable mental pastime than a question of ethics or morals. Thus he was led into practising a kind

of hypocrisy with his father in matters of religion. He felt that it was not worth while engaging in argument of a kind that would have distressed his father and irritated himself, upon matters which he believed to be intellectual, while his father believed them to be ethical. Hugh often pondered over this condition of things, which he felt to be unsatisfactory, but no solution occurred to him; he said to himself that he valued domestic peace rather than a frank understanding upon matters to which he and his father attached a wholly different value. But meantime he drifted further and further away from the ecclesiastical attitude, though his fondness for ecclesiastical art and ceremony effectually disguised from his father the speculative movement of his mind.

But his independent entrance upon his professional life had given him an emancipation of which he was not at first fully conscious. He did not act from set purpose, and only became aware later that if he had thought out a diplomatic scheme of action, he could not have devised a more effectual one. He simply made his own arrangements for the holidays; he travelled, he paid visits; he came home when it was convenient to him; but the result was that in the early years of his professional life he was very little at home. Hugh supposed afterwards

that his father must have felt this deeply; but he did not show it, except that suddenly, almost in a day and an hour, Hugh became aware that their relations had completely altered. He found himself met with a deference, a courteous equality which he had never before experienced. Instead of giving him advice, his father began to ask it, and consulted him freely on matters which he had hitherto kept entirely in his own hands. The result was at once an extraordinary expansion of affection and admiration on Hugh's part. He realised, as he had never done before, the richness and energy of his father's mind within certain limits, his practical ability, his highmindedness, his amazing moral purity. Once freed from the subservient relation imposed upon him by habit, Hugh saw in his father a man of real genius and effectiveness. The effectiveness he had hitherto taken as a matter of course; he had thought of his father as effective in the same way that he had thought of him as severe, dignified, handsome—it had seemed a part of himself; but he now began to compare his father with other men, and to realise that he was not only an exceptional man, but a man with a rare intensity of nature, whose whole life was lived on a plane and in an atmosphere that was impossible to easy, tolerant, conventional natures. He realised his father's capacity for

leadership, his extraordinary and unconscious influence over all with whom he came in contact, the burning glow of his fervid temperament, his scorn and detestation of all that was vile or mean. It did not at once become easier for Hugh to speak freely of what was passing in his own mind; indeed he realised that his father was one of those whose prejudices were so strong, and whose personal magnetism was so great, that not even his oldest and most intimate friends could afford to express opposition to him in matters on which he felt deeply. But Hugh saw that he must accept it as an unalterable condition of his father's nature, and realising this he felt that he could concede him an honour and a homage, due to one of commanding moral greatness, which he had never willingly conceded to his paternal authority. The result was a great and growing happiness. Sometimes indeed Hugh made mistakes: beguiled by the increasing freedom of their intercourse, he allowed himself to discuss lightly matters on which he could hardly believe that any one could feel passionately. But a real and deep friendship sprang up between the two, and Hugh was at times simply astonished at the confidence which his father reposed in him. There were still, indeed, days when the tension was felt. But Hugh became aware that his

father made strong efforts to banish his own depression and melancholy when he was with his son, that it might not cloud their intercourse. Signs such as these came home to Hugh with intense pathos, and evoked an affection which became one of the real forces of his life. His father had consented to Hugh's entering the Civil Service, but he continued to hope that his son might ultimately decide to take orders; he had cherished that hope from Hugh's earliest years, and seeing Hugh's fondness for the externals of religion, while he knew nothing of his mental attitude, he still believed and prayed that Hugh might be led to enter the service of the Church. Hugh realised that this was still his father's deep preoccupation, and perceived that he avoided any direct expression of his wishes, exercising only a transparent diplomacy which was infinitely touching—so touching indeed that Hugh sometimes debated within himself whether he might not so far sacrifice his own bent, which was more and more directed to the maintenance of an independent attitude, in order to give his father so deep and lasting a delight. But he was forced to decide that the motive was not cogent enough, and that to adopt a definite position, involving the suppression of some of his strongest convictions, for the sake of giving one he loved a pleasure, was

like exposing the ark to the risks of battle. He knew well enough that if he had declared his full mind on the subject to his father, the extent to which he felt forced to suspend his judgment in religious matters, his father would have desired the step no longer.

With the rest of the family circle, in these years, Hugh's relations were affectionate but colourless. With his natural reticence, he shrank from speaking of the thoughts which predominated in his mind; especially while there was an abundance of interesting and uncontroversial topics which afforded endless subjects of conversation; and the tendency to leave matters alone which, if debated, might have caused distress, was heightened by the death of one of Hugh's sisters.

She was a girl of a very deep, loyal, and generous nature, full of activities and benevolence, and at the same time of a reflective order of mind. She had been a strong central force in the family; and Hugh found it strange to realise, after her death, that each member of the family had felt themselves in a peculiar relation to her, as the object of her special preoccupation. The event, which was strangely sudden, stirred Hugh to the bottom of his soul. The vacant chair, the closed room, the sudden cessation of a hundred activities, brought sharply to his

mind the dark mystery of death. That a door should thus have been suddenly opened, and one of the familiar band bidden to enter, and that the loving heart that had left them should be unable to communicate the slightest hint of its presence to those who desired her in vain, seemed to him a horrible and desperate thing. For the first time in his life the terrible secrets of identity opened before his eyes. He could not bring himself to believe in the extinction of so vital, so individual a force, but he recognised with a mournful terror that, so far as scientific evidence went, the whole preponderating force of facts tended to prove that the individuality was, if not extinguished, at least merged in some central tide of life, and that the only rebutting evidence was the cry of the burdened heart that dared not believe a possibility so stern, so appalling. He wrestled dumbly and darkly against these sad convictions, and how many times, in miserable solitude, did he send out a wistful prayer that, if it were possible, some hint, some slender vision, might be granted him as a proof that one so dear, so desired, so momently missed, was still near him in spirit. But no answer came back from the dark threshold, and, leaning in, he could but discern a landscape of shapeless horror, in which no live thing moved by the shore of a grey and weltering sea.

Little by little a dim hint came to comfort him; he thought of all the unnumbered generations of men who had lived their brief lives in sun and shade, full of hopes and schemes and affections. One by one they had lain down in the dust. In the face of so immutable, so absolute a law, it seemed that rebellion and questioning were fruitless. God gives, God takes away, He makes and mars, He creates, He dissolves; and if we cannot trust the Will that bids us be and not be, what else in this shifting world, full of dark secrets, can we trust? It cannot be said that this thought comforted Hugh, but it sustained him. He learned again to suspend his hopes and fears, and to leave all confidently in the hands of God; and time, too, had its healing balm; the bitter loss, by soft gradations, became a sweet and loving memory, and a memory that sweetened the thought of the dark world whither too he must sometime turn his steps. For if indeed our individuality endures, he could realise that one who loved so purely, so loyally, so intensely, would not fail him on the other side of the silent river, but would welcome him with unabated love, perhaps only feeling a tender wonder that those who yet had the passage to make should find it to be so terrible, so unendurable.

VII

THE question which, when he resigned his appointment, occupied Hugh, was where he should live. He would have preferred to settle in the country, loving, as he did, silence and pure air, woods and fields. He had never liked London, though it had become endurable to him by familiarity. He decided, however, that at first, at all events, he must if possible find a place where he could see a certain amount of society, and where he would be able to obtain the books he expected to need. He was afraid that if he transferred himself at once to the country he might sink into a morbid seclusion, as he had no strong sociable impulses. His thoughts naturally turned to his own university. He thought that if he could find a small house at Cambridge, suitable to his means, he would be able to have as much or as little society as he desired, while at the same time he would be on the edge of the country. Moreover the flat fenland, which is generally supposed to be unattractive, had always possessed

a peculiar charm for Hugh. He spent some time at home, revelling in his freedom, while he made inquiries for a house. The thought of a long perspective of days before him, without fixed engagements, without responsibilities, so that he could come and go as he pleased, filled him with delight.

His father had not at all disapproved of the decision. Hugh had shown him that he was pecuniarily independent; but he was aware that in the background of his father's mind lay the hope that, even so late in life, he might still be drawn to enter the ministry of the Church. At all events he thought that Hugh might gain some academical position; and thus he gave a decidedly cordial assent to the change, only expressing a hope that Hugh would not make a hurried decision.

Hugh did not delay to sketch out a plan of work. But whereas before he had worked only when he could, he now found himself in the blessed position of being able to work when he would. Instead of becoming, as he had feared, desultory, he found that his work exercised a strong attraction over him—indeed that it became for him, with an amazing swiftness, the one pursuit in the world about which exercise, food, amusement, grouped themselves as secondary accessories. This was no doubt in

part accounted for by the fact that he had acquired a habit of regular work, a craving for steady occupation ; but it was also far more due to the fact that Hugh had really, and almost as though by accident, discovered his ruling passion. He was in truth a writer, a word-artist ; his only fear was whether, in the hard work of unmitigated years of specified toil, he had not perhaps lost the requisite mental agility, whether he had not failed to acquire the elastic use of words, the almost instinctive sense of colour and motion in language, which can only be won through constant and even unsuccessful use. That remained to be seen ; and meanwhile his plans settled themselves. He found a small, picturesque, irregularly-built house crushed in between the road and the river, which in fact dipped its very feet in the stream ; from its quaint oriel and gallery, Hugh could look down, on a bright day, into the clear heart of the water, and survey its swaying reeds and poising fish. The house was near the centre of the town ; yet from its back windows it overlooked a long green stretch of rough pasture-land, now a common, and once a fen, which came like a long green finger straight into the very heart of the town. There was a great sluice a few yards away, through which the river poured into a wide reach of

stream, so that the air was always musical with the sound of falling water, the murmur of which could be heard on still nights through the shuttered and curtained casements. The sun, on the short winter days, used to set, in smouldering glory, behind the long lines of leafless trees which terminated the fen; and in summer the little wooded peninsula that formed part of a neighbouring garden was rich in leaf, and loud with the song of birds. The little house had, in fact, the poetical quality, and charmed the eye and ear at every turn, the whisper of the little weir outside seeming to brim with sweet contented sound every corner of the quaint, irregular, and low-ceiled rooms, with their large beams and dark corners.

So Hugh settled here after his emancipation, and for the first time in his life realised what it meant to be free. He woke day after day to the sensation that he had no engagements, no ties; that he could arrange his hours of work and liberty as he liked, go where he would; that no person would question his right, interfere with his independence, or even take the least interest in his movements. His freedom was at first, to his dismay, something of a burden to him; he had been used to ceaseless interruptions, multifarious engagements; the one struggle, the

one preoccupation, had been to win a few hours for solitude, for reflection, for literary work. But now that the whole of time was at his disposal, he found himself unable to concentrate his mind, to apply himself. He had several friends at Cambridge; but the strain of making new acquaintances, of familiarising himself with the temperaments and the tastes of the new set of personalities, was very great. It was impossible for Hugh to enter upon neutral, civil, colourless relations. He could not meet a man or a woman without endeavouring to find some common ground of sympathy and understanding. And this was made more difficult to him at Cambridge by the swift monotony in which the years had flowed away. Time seemed to have stood still there in those twenty years. Many of the men that he remembered seemed still to be there, contentedly pursuing the customary round, circulating from their rooms to Hall, from Hall to Combination-room, and back again. Thus Hugh, picking up the thread where he had laid it down, appeared to himself to be youthful, inexperienced, insignificant; while to those who made his acquaintance he seemed to be a grave and serious man of affairs, with a standing in the world and a definite line of his own.

Thus the first months were months of some

depression. Not that he would have gone back if he could, or that he ever doubted of the wisdom, the inevitableness of the step; even in moments of dejection it cheered him to feel that he was not eating his heart out in fruitless work, or solemnly performing a duty, which relied for seriousness upon its outer place in a settled scheme, rather than upon any intrinsic value that it possessed. But his life soon settled down into a steady routine. He gave his mornings to letters, business, and reading; his afternoons to exercise; his evenings to writing and academical sociabilities. His aim began gradually to be to make the most of the sacred hours of the late afternoon, when his mind was most alert, and when he seemed to possess the easiest mastery of language. He consecrated those hours to his chosen work, and it was his object to fit himself, as by a species of training, to make the most and best of that good time, which lay like gold among the débris of the day. It seemed to him that the solid, unimaginative work of the morning cleared away a certain heaviness and sluggishness of apprehension, which was the shadow of sleep; that the open air, the active movement of the afternoon, removed the clumsier and grosser insistence of the body; and that there resulted a frame of mind, when the imagination was lively and alert,

and when the willing brain served out its stores with a cordial rapidity. There was a danger perhaps of selfish absorption in such a scheme of life; but at least no artist ever more sedulously cultivated the best and most fruitful conditions for the practice of his art. Hugh grew to have an almost morbid sense of the value of time. Interruptions, social entertainments, engagements which interfered with his programme, he resented and resolutely avoided. He became indeed aware that other people, to whom the value of his work was not apparent, were apt to regard the jealous arrangement of his hours as the mere whim of a self-absorbed dilettante. But that troubled Hugh little, because he realised that his only hope of doing sound and worthy work lay in making a sacrifice of the ordinary and trifling occupations of life, of forming definite habits, for the want of which so many capable and brilliant persons sink into unproductiveness.

Yet the life had a danger which Hugh did not at first perceive. It tended to concentrate his thoughts too much upon himself. His writings took a personal colour, a warm, self-regarding light, of which his candid friends did not hesitate to make him aware. The bitterness of the slow progress of a book, and of the long time that must elapse between its execution

and its appearance, is that the readers of it tend to consider that it reflects the exact contemporary thought of its writer. Hugh's mind and personality grew fast in those days; and by the time that his friends were criticising a book as the outcome of his immediate thought, he was feeling himself that it was but a milestone on the road, marking a spot that he had left leagues behind him.

But the creative instinct, which had struggled fitfully with the hard practical conditions of his professional life, now took a sudden bound forward. His writing became the one important thing in the world for Hugh. He had gained, he found, through constant practice, dry as the labour had been, a considerable fluency and firmness of touch: now sentences shaped themselves under his hand like living things; words flowed easily from their abundant reservoir. Yet the peril, which he soon grew to perceive, was that his outfit of emotional experience, his knowledge of human life in its breadth and complexity, was very narrow and limited. He had seen life only under a single aspect, and that an aspect which, poignant and intense as it was, did not easily lend itself to artistic treatment. The result was that his outlook was a narrow one, and his mind was driven back upon itself. The need to speak, to express, to shape

thoughts in appropriate words, so long repressed, so instinctive to him, became almost fearfully imperative. He was haunted by a hundred ardent speculations in art, in literature, in religion, in metaphysics, all of a vague rather than a precise kind. His mind had been always of a loose, poetical type, turning to the quality of things rather than to outward facts or practical questions. Temperaments, individualities, appealed to him more than national movements or aspirations; and then the old love of nature came back like a solemn passion.

This sudden growth of egotism and introspection tended to alarm and disquiet Hugh's friends; they put it down to his severance from practical activities, and began to fear a morbid and self-regarding attitude. Yet Hugh knew that it would right itself; it was but the completion of a process, begun in his college days, and checked by his early entry into professional life; it was return of his youth, the natural fulfilment of that period of speculative thought, which a young man must pass through before he can put himself in line with the world. And in any case it was inevitable; and Hugh was content as before to leave himself in the hand of God, only glad at least that a process which would naturally have been finished under the

overshadowing of the melancholy of youth, could thus be worked out with the temperate tranquillity, the serenity of manhood.

VIII

AFTER all the inevitable bustle, the moving and settling of furniture, the constant noting of small needs, the conferences with tradesmen, all the details inseparable from establishing a new home, had died away, Hugh found himself, as has been said, for the first time in his life in comparative solitude. He had a few old friends in Cambridge; but unless two men are members of the same college, meetings, in a place of many small engagements, have to be deliberately arranged. Hugh could always go and dine in the hall of his college, and be certain of finding there a quiet good-fellowship and a pleasant tolerance. But he had not as yet mastered the current of little incidents which furnish so much of the conversation of small societies: allusions to facts familiar to all beside himself were perpetually being made; and he knew that nothing is so tiresome as a would-be sympathetic questioner, who does not understand the precise lie of the ground. He had as yet no definite work; a literary task in which

he was shortly to be engaged had not as yet begun; the materials had not been placed in his hands. Thus compelled by circumstances to pass through a period of enforced retreat, Hugh resolved upon a certain course of action. He determined to put down in writing, for his own instruction and benefit, the precise position he held in thought—his hopes, his desires, his beliefs. He set to work, it must be confessed, in a melancholy mood, the melancholy that is inseparable from the position of a man who has lived a very full and active life, and from whom the burden of activities is suddenly lifted. Though the lifting of the weight was an immense relief, and though he could often summon back cheerfulness by reflecting how entire his freedom was, and how troublesomely he would have been occupied if he had still held his professional position, yet the mere fact that there was no longer any necessity to brace his energies and faculties to meet some particular call of duty, gave him spaces of a flaccid dreariness, in which his accustomed literary work palled on him; one could not read or write for ever; and so he set himself, as I have said, to compose a memorandum, a *symbol*, so to speak, of his moral and intellectual faith.

He was surprised, as soon as he began his task, to find how much of what he had believed

to be certainties shrank and dwindled. A perfect sincerity with himself was the only possible condition under which such a work was worth undertaking. A sincerity which should resolutely discard all that was merely traditional and customary, should emphasise nothing, should regard nothing as proved, in which hope outran scientific certainty.

He found that his creed began with a deep and abiding faith in God; he believed, that is, in the existence of an all-pervading, all-powerful Will, lying behind and in the scheme of things.

Side by side with this belief, and inextricably interwoven with it, was his belief in his own identity and personality. That was perhaps the only thing of which he was ultimately assured. But his experience of the world was that it was peopled by similar personalities, each of whom seemed equally conscious of a separate existence, who were swayed by motives similar in kind, though differing in detail, from the motives which swayed himself; beyond these personalities lay whole ranges of sentient beings, which sank at last, by slow and minute gradations, into matter which seemed to him to be inanimate; but even all this was permeated by certain forces, themselves unseen, but the symptoms of which were apparent in

all directions, such as heat, motion, attraction, electricity. He believed it possible that all these might be different manifestations and specimens of the same central force; but it was nothing more than a vague possibility.

He was next confronted with a mysterious fact. In every day and hour of his own life he was brought face to face with a double experience. At moments he felt himself full of life, health, and joy; at other moments he felt himself equally subject to torpor, *malaise*, and suffering. What it was that made these two classes of experience clear to him he could not tell; but there was no questioning the fact that at times he was the subject of experience of a pleasant kind, which he would have prolonged if he could; while at times he was equally conscious of experiences which his only desire was to terminate as speedily as possible.

This mystery, which no philosopher had ever explained, seemed to him to run equally through the whole of nature. He asked himself whether he was in the presence of two warring forces. Would the Will, whatever it was, which produced happiness, have made that happiness permanent, if it could? was it thwarted by some other power, perhaps equally strong—though it seemed to Hugh that the happiness of most sentient beings decidedly

and largely predominated over their unhappiness—a power which was deliberately inimical to joy and peace, health and well being?

It seemed to him, however, that the two were so inextricably intermingled, and so closely ministered the one to the other, that there was an essential unity of the Will at work; and that both joyful and painful experiences were the work of the same mind. He therefore rejected at the outset the belief that what was commonly called evil could be a principle foreign to the nature of the Will of God; and he put aside as childish the belief that evil is created by the faculty of human choice, setting itself against the benevolent Will of God; for benevolence thus hampered would at once become a mere tame and ineffective desire for the welfare of sentient things, and be wholly deprived of all the attributes of omnipotence. Besides, he saw the same qualities that produced suffering in humanity, such as the instincts of cruelty, lust, self-preservation, manifesting themselves with equal force among those sentient creatures which did not seem to be capable of exercising any moral choice.

But in regarding nature, as revealed by the researches of scientists, he saw that there was a slow development taking place, a development

of infinite patience and almost insupportable delay. Finer and finer became the organisation of animal life; and in the development of human life, too, he saw a slow progress, a daily deepening power of organising natural resources to gratify increasingly complicated needs. Not only was an energy at work, but a progressive energy, bringing into existence things that were not, and revealing secrets unknown before.

He next attempted to define his moral belief; and here, too, he saw in the world a progressive force at work. He saw society becoming more and more refined, more desirous to amend faulty conditions, more anxious to alleviate pain; and this not only with self-regarding motives, but with a vital sympathy, which reached its height in the deliberate purpose of many individuals that, even if condemned to suffer themselves, they would yet spend thought and energy in relieving, if possible, the ills of others.

He saw in the teaching of Christ what appeared to be the purest and simplest attempt ever made to formulate unselfish affection. No teacher of morals had ever reached the point of inculcating upon men the belief that it was the highest joy to spend the energies of life in contributing to the happiness of others. Though he saw in the system of Christ, as popularised

and interpreted, a whole host of insecure assumptions, unverified assertions, and even degrading traditions, yet he could not doubt the Divine force of the central message. If he was not in a position to affirm with certitude the truth of the recorded events which attained the origin of the Christian revelation, he could yet affirm with confidence that in the teaching of Christ a higher range of emotion had been reached than had ever been approached before; and he saw that spirit, in countless regions, however slowly, leavening the thought, the instincts of the world. The question then resolved itself into a practical one. How in his own life was he to make the serenity, the happiness which he desired, predominate over the suffering, the discontent to which he was liable? Could it be done by an effort of mind? His professional life had shown him that activity had not brought him any peace of mind, principally because the system which he was bound to serve demanded such immense expense of labour for purely unprofitable ends. It had not been part of the humble and necessary work of the world, which must be done by some one, if human beings are to live at all; it had only been the outcome of the needlessly elaborate life of a highly organised community. It had filled his life full of a futile intellectual toil.

And then, the effect upon his own character had been to hamper and stunt his natural energies. It had given him false ideals and wrong motives.

Looking back at his own life, Hugh saw that ambition, in one form or another, had poisoned his spirit. He saw that the instinct to gain a supremacy at the expense of others had been the one serious motive pressed upon him from first to last; indeed the necessity for moral control had been really, though not nominally, urged upon him, on the ground that by yielding to bodily desires he would be likely to frustrate his visions of success. Only of late had he had any suspicion of the truth, that gentleness, peacefulness, kindness, sincerity, quiet toil, activity of body and mind, were the things that really made life sweet and joyful. Had he learned it too late to be able to exorcise the demons that had so long harboured in his soul? He feared so.

But at last, after long pondering, he arrived at his decision, which was that if indeed this vast and patient Will was in the background of all, the only way was to follow it, to lean upon it; above all things not to be distracted by the conventions of society, which, though they, too, in a sense, had their origin in the Will of God, yet were things to be left behind, to be strug-

gled out of. There might indeed be some natures to which such things were attractive and satisfying, but Hugh had no doubt that though they might attract him, they could not satisfy.

And yet over his thoughts there brooded the shadow of the sad possibilities that lay in wait for him, and of which he had already felt the touch—pain, weariness, a discontented mind, jealousy, despair, and at the end of all death, which closed the prospect whichever way he looked. But if these things, too, were of the very nature of God, His Will indeed, though obscure and terrible, the only way was in a patient and loving submission, a knowledge that they could not be wholly in vain; and so he resolved that his life should be even so; that he would embrace all opportunities of showing kindness, giving help to others; that he would live a simple life of labour, using his faculties to the uttermost, as God should provide; and that his whole being should be a deliberate prayer that he might do the Will of God as affected himself, without seeking the praise or recognition of men. He foresaw indeed much solitude, much weariness. God had never given him one whom he could unreservedly love, though He had sent him abundance of pure and noble friendships. Quiet

dependence upon God, simplicity of life, a readiness to serve, a strenuous use of the gifts given to him; that was the faith in which Hugh, now late in life, and after what profitless squandering of energies, began his pilgrimage.

IX

It seemed strange to Hugh to sit there as he did, in his quiet house beside the stream, with an active professional life behind him, and wonder what the next act would be. His time was now filled with an editorial task which would demand all his energies, or rather a large part of them; but editorial work, however interesting in itself—and the interest of his particular work was great—left one part of the mind unsatisfied; that part of the mind which desired to create some beautiful thing. Hugh's difficulty was this, that he had no very urgent message, to use a dignified word, to deliver to the world. Nowadays, to appeal to the world, it is necessary to do things, it would seem, in rather a strident way, to blow a trumpet, or wave a flag, or command an army, or reform a department of state, or control a railroad. Hugh had neither the power nor the will to write a virile book or a powerful story, or to take imagination captive. He did not wish to head a revolt against anything in particular. The day of the old, grim, sinister tyrannies, he

felt, in the Western corner of the world, was over, and the kind of tyranny that vexed his spirit was a far more secret and subtle distortion of liberty. It was the rule of conventionality that he desired to destroy, the appetite for luxury, and power, and excitement, and strong sensation. He would have liked to do something to win men back to the joys that were within the reach of all, the joys of peaceful work, and simplicity, and friendship, and quiet hopefulness. These were what seemed to Hugh to be the staple of life, and to be within the reach of so many people. And yet he had no mission. He could only detest the loud voices of the world and its feverish excitements, with all his heart; and on the other hand he loved with increasing contentment the gentler and beautiful background of life, that enacted itself every day in the garden and field and wood; the quiet waiting things, the old church seen over orchards and cottage-roofs, the deep pool in the reedy river, dreaming its own quiet dreams, whatever passed in the noisy world. He was sure that those things would bring peace to many weary spirits, if they could but learn to love them.

Artists and musicians, Hugh felt, were the happiest of all people; for they made the beautiful thing that might stand by itself, without

the need of comment. The graceful boy or girl that they painted, undimmed by age and evil experience, looked down at you from the canvas with a pure and radiant smile, and became, as it were, a spring of clear water, where a soul might bathe and be clean. Or the picture of some silent woodland place, some lilied pool on a golden summer afternoon —how the peace of it came into the spirit, how it seemed to assure the heart that God loved beauty best, lavishing it with an unwearied hand, even where there could be none to behold it but Himself! Then the musician,—how he wove the airy stuff of sound, so that the pathos of the world, its heavy mysteries, its sunlit joys, started into life, embracing the soul, and bidding it not to be faithless or blind. These were the pure gifts of art, the spells before which the dull conventions of the world, its noise and dust, crumbled into the ugly ashes that they really were.

Beside those magical secrets the clumsy art of the writer stood abashed. Those tints, those notes were such definite things; but in the grosser and more tainted medium with which writers dealt, where so much depended upon association and point of view, there was so much less certainty of producing the effect intended, that one faltered and lost faith. One

thing was certain, that it was useless to *search* for a mission; the purpose must descend from heaven, as the eagle pounced on Ganymede, and carry the trembling and awed minister high above the heads of men. But the only thing that the faithful writer could do was to map out some little piece of quiet work, make no vast design, seek for no large sovereignty; and then work patiently on with ever-present enjoyment, learning his art, gaining skill and mastery over his vast and complex instrument, till he gained certainty of touch and the power of saying, with perfect lucidity, with pure transparency of phrase, exactly what he meant; and then, behind his art, to live resolutely in his simple creed, whatever article of it he could master, sure of this, that if his inspiration came, he would be able to present it worthily; and if it did not come—well, his would have been a grave, quiet, gracious life, like the life of a song-bird that had never had an audience, or a stream which dropped in crystal cataracts from unvisited rocks, upon which no gazer's eye had ever fallen. And so there shaped itself what must be for the lover of the beautiful the first article of his faith, the thought that the happiness of art came in the making, the weighing, the disposing, and not in the recognition of the triumph by others; and that

the temptation to gain a hearing, to touch hearts, to sway emotions was a natural one enough, but that it must be the first of all to be discarded, as one set foot in the enchanted world, among the dim valleys and rock-ridges, the thickets and the plains, that stretched beyond the sunset and on to the sea's rim,—that wider, more shadowy, more remote world of awe and mystery which lay so near, outside the window, at the opening of a door, at the sound of a voice, the glance of an eye, and in which one's busy fevered life was set, like the print of the wind's footstep in the crisping wave, on the surface of some vast unfathomable sea.

X

In reading biographies of illustrious personages, Hugh was often interested and surprised to compare the pictures of undergraduate life drawn there with his own experience of that period. They were generally related in the form of reminiscences, seen far-off, at the end of a long perspective of years. It was generally represented as a period of high enthusiasm, intense energy, eager work, unclouded happiness. The perception of great problems, noble thoughts, seemed in these reminiscences to have fallen on chivalrous minds with a deep natural joy. They recorded hours of matchless talk, ingenuous debate, brilliant wit, scintillating intellect. Hugh liked to believe that this was the case, but he often wondered whether it was not all heightened by retrospect, and whether the radiance of the whole picture was not merely the radiance of recollected youth. If the picture was a true one, then the later years of the men whose lives were thus told, of whom more than one were

known personally to Hugh, must have been years of sad physical and mental decline. There was one person in particular, an eminent ecclesiastic, who had been a frequent guest at his father's house, in whom Hugh had never discovered any particular swiftness of perception, of agility of mind, yet the reminiscences of whose undergraduate years were given in a vein of high enthusiasm. This worthy clergyman had seemed, if his memory was to be trusted, to have been the shining centre of a group whose life threw the life of young Athens, as represented by Plato, into the shade. The man in question seemed, in later years, a sturdily built clergyman, slow and cautious of speech, brusque and even grim of address, sensible, devoted to commonplace activities, and with a due appreciation of the comforts and conveniences of life. His conversation had no suggestiveness or subtlety. He was grumpy in the morning and good-humoured in the evening. He seemed impatient of new ideas, and endowed with a firm grasp of conventional and obvious notions.

Hugh's own recollection of his university days was very different, and yet he had lived in what might be called an intellectual set. There had been plenty of easy friendship, abundance of lively gossip, incessant and rather tedious fes-

tivities. Men had groaned and grumbled over their work, played games with hearty conviction, had nourished no great illusions about themselves and each other, had had few generous and ardent visions about art, poetry, or humanity; or, if they had, they had kept them to themselves with a very good show of contented indifference. There was indeed a little society to which Hugh had belonged, where books, and not very recondite ideas, of ethical or moral import, were discussed freely and amiably, without affectation, and occasionally with a certain amount of animation. But the arguments engendered were flimsy, inconsequent, and fantastic enough; the dialectic flashed to and fro, never very convincing, and mostly intended to aggravate rather than to persuade. Even at the time it had often appeared to Hugh to be shallow and flimsy. He had seldom heard a subject debated with any thoroughness or justice, and he had learned far more from the preparation of occasional papers framed to initiate a discussion, than from any discussion that followed. The best thoughts that Hugh had apprehended in those days had been the thoughts that he had won from books; his mind had opened rapidly then, in the direction of a kind of poetical metaphysic, not deep speculation on the ultimate nature of things, so much as reflection on the

more psychological problems of character and personality. It seemed to Hugh that his own mind, and the minds of those with whom he had lived, had been a mass of prejudices, of half-formed and inconsistent theories. None of them had had any policy into which they fitted the ideas that came to them; but a new and attractive idea had been seized upon, on its own merits, without any reference to other theories, or with any desire to co-ordinate it with other ideas, which were indeed just thrust aside to make room for the new one.

Hugh's idea of mental progress, in his later years, was the slow dwelling upon some thought, the quiet application of it to other thoughts. It seemed an inversion of the ordinary method of progress, if the biographies that he read were true. Taking the case, for instance, of the particular man whom Hugh had known, and whose biography he had studied, he seemed in youth to have been generous, fearless, candid, and ardent, and life must have been to him a process of hardening and encrusting with prejudice; he seemed to have begun with a bright faith in ideas, and to have ended with a dull belief in organisations. He had begun by being thrilled with the beauty of virtue, and he had ended by supporting the G.F.S. Hugh's experience was the exact opposite of this. He had begun, he

thought, by being loaded and burdened with prejudices and stupid notions, acquired he knew not how; he had not doubted the value of authority, tradition, usage; as life went on, it seemed to him, that he had got rid of his prejudices one by one, and that he had arrived, at the age of forty, at valuing sincerity, sympathy, simplicity, and candour above dogma and accumulated beliefs. He had begun with a firm faith in systems and institutions; he had ended by basing all his hopes on the individual. He had begun by looking for beauty and perfection wherever he was told to expect it; if he had not discerned it, he had blamed his own dulness of perception. It had been a heavy and soulless business; and the real freshness of life, intellectual curiosity, mental independence seemed to have come to him in fullest measure, just at the age when most men seemed to have parted with those qualities. As an undergraduate, he had been more aware of fitfulness and weariness than anything; only gradually had he become conscious of concentration, sustained zest, intention. Then he had tended to condemn enthusiasm as a species of defective manners. Now he lived by its steady light. Then he had been at the mercy of a new idea, an attractive personality. He shuddered to think how easily he had made

friendships, and how contemptuously he had broken them the moment he was disappointed. Now he weighed and tested more; but at the same time he also opened his heart and his thoughts far more deliberately and frankly to sympathetic and generous people.

Hugh seemed to have found rather than to have lost his youth. His actual youth, indeed, seemed to him to have been a tremulous thing, full of fears and sensibilities, feminine, unbalanced, frivolous. Life had so far been to Hugh pure gain. Looking back he saw himself irresolute, vague, sentimental, incapable of application, unmethodical, half-hearted. He had had none of the buoyancy, the splendid dreams, the sparkling ambitions that seemed, according to the records, to have been the stuff of great men's youth.

He sat one day in the ante-chapel of his old college, through a morning service, listening, as in a dream, to the sweet singing within; it seemed but a day since he had sat in his stall, a fitful-hearted boy. The service ended, and the procession streamed out, the rich tints of the windows lighting up the faces and the white surplices of the men, old and young, that issued from the dark door of the screen. Hugh felt within himself that he would not have the old days back again even if he could; he was no-

thing but grateful for the balance, the serenity, that life had brought him. He was conscious of greater strength, undimmed energy, increased zest; faltering indeed he was still, not better, not more unselfish; but he had a sense of truer values, more proportion, more contentment. The mysteries of life were as dark as ever, but at least he no longer thought that he had the key; in those days his little rickety system of life, that trembled in every breeze, had seemed for him to bridge all gaps, to explain all mysteries. Now, indeed, chaos stretched all about him, full of huge mists, dark chasms, hidden echoes; but he perceived something of its vastness and immensity; he had broken down the poor frail fences of his soul, and was in contact with reality. He did not doubt that he seemed to the younger generation an elderly and sombre personage, stumbling down the dark descent of life, with youth and brightness behind him; but that descent appeared to himself to be rather an upward-rising road, over dim mountains, the air glowing about him with some far-off sunrise. Poetry, art, religion—they meant a thousand-fold more to him than they had meant in the old days. They had been pretty melodies, deft tricks of hand, choice toys then. Now they were exultations, agonies, surrenders, triumphs. The prospect of life had

been to him in those days like misty ranges, full of threatening precipices and dumb valleys in which no foot had trod. Now he saw from the hill-brow, a broad and goodly land full of wood and pasture, clustered hamlets, glittering, smoke-wrapt towns, rivers widening to the sea; the horizons closed by the blue hills of hope, from which life and love, and even death itself, seemed to wave hands of welcome ere they dipped to the unseen. He blessed God for that; and best of all he had no desire, as he had had in the old days, to be understood, to be felt, to claim a place, to exercise an influence. He had put all that aside; his only concern was now to step as swiftly, as strongly as possible, upon the path that opened before him, caring little whether it led on to grassy moorlands, or sheltered valleys full of wood, or even to the towered walls of some strong city of God.

XI

HUGH, in his leisure, determined to try if he could set his mind at rest on one point, a question that had always exercised a certain attraction over him. This was to make himself acquainted with some technical philosophy, or at any rate to try and see what the philosophers were doing. He had not, he was aware, a mind suited for the pursuit of metaphysics; he had little logical faculty and little power of deduction; he tended to view a question at bright and radiant points; he could not systematise or arrange it. He did not expect to be able to penetrate the mystery, or to advance step by step nearer to the dim and ultimate causes of things; but he thought he would like to look into the philosophers' workshop, as a man might visit a factory. He expected to see a great many processes going on the nature of which he did not hope to discern, and the object of which would be made still more obscure by the desperately intelligent explanations of some obliging workman, who would glibly use tech-

nical words to which he would himself be able to attach no sort of meaning.

But after a few excursions into modern philosophy, in which he seemed, as Tennyson said, to be wading as in a sea of glue, he went back to the earliest philosophers and read Aristotle and Plato. He soon conceived a great horror of Aristotle, of his subtle and ingenious analysis, which often seemed to him to be an attempt to define the undefinable, and never to touch the point of the matter at all; he thought that Aristotle was often occupied in the scientific treatment of essentially poetical ideas, and in the attempt to classify rather than to explain. Yet there were moments, it seemed to him, when Aristotle, writing with a kind of grim contempt for the vagueness of Plato, was carried off his feet by the Platonic enthusiasm; and so Hugh turned to Plato which he had scrambled through as an undergraduate long years before. How incomparably beautiful it was! It revealed to Hugh what he had before only dimly suspected, that the poet, the moralist, the priest, the philosopher, and even the man of science, were all in reality engaged in the same task—penetrating the vast and bewildering riddle of the world. In Plato he found the philosophical method suffused by a burning poetical imagination; and he thought that Plato solved far more

metaphysical riddles by a species of swift intuition than ever could be done by the closest analysis. He realised that Plato's theory was of a great, central, motionless entity, which acted not by expulsive energy but by a sort of magnetic attraction; and that all the dreams, the hopes, the activities of human minds were not the ripples of some central outward-speeding force, but the irresistible inner motion, as to the loadstone or the vortex, which made itself felt through the whole universe, material and immaterial alike. The intense desire to know, to solve, to improve, to gain a tranquil balance of thought, was nothing more, Hugh perceived, than this inward-drawing impulse, calling rather than coercing men to aspire to its own supreme serenity; all our ideas of what was pure and beautiful and true, then, were the same vast centripetal force, moving silently inward; all our sorrows, our mistakes, our sufferings, were but the checking of that overpowering influence; and any rest was impossible till we had drawn nearer to the central peace. This seemed to Hugh to be not a theory but an intensely inspiring and practical thought. How light-hearted, how brave a secret! Instead of desiring that all should be made plain at once, one could rejoice in the thought that one was certainly speeding homewards; and ex-

perience was no longer a blind conflict of forces, but a joyful nearing of the central sum of things. At all events, what a blitheness, what a zest it gave to the genius of Plato himself! With what eager inquisitiveness, in a sort of a childlike gaiety, he hurried hither and thither, catching at every point some bright indication of the delightful mystery. Plato seemed to differ from the serious and preoccupied philosophers in this, that while they were lost in a grave and anxious scrutiny of phenomena, he was rather penetrated by the cheerfulness, the romance of the whole business. The intense personal emotions, which to the analytical philosophers seemed mere distracting elements, experiences to be forgotten, crushed and left behind, were to Plato supreme manifestations of the one desire. One desired in others what one desired in God; the sense of admiration, the longing for sympathy the desire that no close embrace, no passionate glance could satisfy, these were but deep yearnings after the perfect sympathy, the perfect understanding of God. And thus when Plato appeared most to be trifling with a subject, to be turning it over and over as a man may turn about a crystal in his hands, watching the lights blend and flash and separate on the polished facets, he was really draw-

ing nearer to the truth, absorbing its delicious radiance and sweetness. Those sunny mornings, spent in strolling and talking, in colonnade or garden, in that imperishable Athens, seemed to Hugh like the talk of saints in some celestial city. Saints not of heavy and pious rectitude, conventional in posture and dreary in mind, but souls to whom love and laughter, pathos and sorrow, were alike sweet. Instead of approaching life with a sense of its gravity, its heinousness, its complexity, timid of joy and emotion and delight, practising sadness and solemnity, Plato and his followers began at the other end, and with an irrepressible optimism believed that joy was conquering and not being conquered, that light was in the ascendant, rippling outwards and onwards. And then the supreme figure of all, whether imaginary or not mattered little, Socrates himself, with what a joyful soberness and gravity did he move forward through experience, never losing his balance, but serenely judging all till the moment came for him to enter behind the dark veil of death; and this he did with the same imperturbable good-humour, neither lingering nor hasting, but with a tranquil confidence that life was beginning rather than ending.

And then Hugh saw in a flash that the essence

of the Gospel itself was like that. When he read the sacred record in the light of Plato, it seemed to him as if it must in some subtle way be pervaded by the same bright intuitions as those which lit up the Greek mind. It seemed to Hugh a strange and bewildering thing that the pure message of simplicity and love, with its tender waiting upon God, its delight in flowers and hills, its love of great ideas, its rich poetry, its perfect art, had taken on the gloomy metaphysical tinge that St. Paul, with all his genius, had contrived to communicate to it. Surely it was intolerable to believe that all those subtle notions of sacrificial satisfaction, of justification, of substitution, had ever crossed the Saviour's mind at all. In a sense He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, for they had laid down, in grief and doubt, a harsh code of morality, because they saw no other way of leavening the conscience of the world. But the Saviour, at least in the simple records, had not trafficked in such thoughts; He had but shown the significance of the primary emotions, had taught humanity that it was free as air, dear to the heart of God, heir of a goodly inheritance of love and care. St. Paul was a man of burning ardour, but had he not made the mistake of trying to lend too intellectual, too erudite, too complicated a colour to it all?

The essence of the Gospel seemed to be that man should not be bound by the tradition of men; but St. Paul had been so intent upon drawing in those to whom tradition was dear, that in trying to harmonise the new with the old, he had made concessions and developed doctrines that had detrimentally affected Christianity ever since, and gone near to cast it in a different mould. Of course there was a certain continuity in religion, a development. But St. Paul was so deeply imbued with Rabbinical methods and Jewish tradition, that in his splendid attempt to show that Christianity was the fulfilment of the Law, he had deeply infected the pure stream with Jewish ideas. The essence of Christianity was meant to be a *tabula rasa.* Christ bade men trust their deepest and widest intuitions, their sense of dependence upon God, their consciousness of divine origin. In this respect the teaching of Christ had more in common with the teaching of Plato, than the doctrine of St. Paul with the doctrine of Christ. Christ was concerned with the future, St. Paul with the past; Christ was concerned with religious instinct, St. Paul with religious development. The strength of the Gospel of Christ was that it depended rather on the poetical and emotional consciousness of religion, and thus made its appeal to the majority of the

human race. Plato, on the other hand, was too intellectual, and a perception of his doctrine was hardly possible except to a man of subtle and penetrating ability. Hugh wondered if it would be possible to put the doctrine of Plato in such a light that it would appeal to simple people; he thought that it would be possible; and here he was struck by the fact that Plato, like Christ, employed the device of the parable largely as a means of interpreting religious ideas. The teaching of the Gospel and the teaching of Plato were alike deeply idealistic. They both depended upon the simple idea that men could conceive of themselves as better than they actually were, and upon the fact that such a conception is the strongest motive force in the world in the direction of self-improvement. The mystery of conversion is nothing more than the conscious apprehension of the fact that one's life is meant to be noble and beautiful, and that one has the power to make it nobler and more beautiful than it is.

It seemed to Hugh, reflecting on the development of Christianity, that perhaps it was not too much to say that the Pauline influence had been to a great extent a misfortune; it was true that in a sense he had resisted the Jewish tyranny, and moreover that his writings were

full of splendid aphorisms, inspiring thoughts, generous ideals. But he had formalised Christianity for all that; he had linked it closely to the Judaic system; he was ultimately responsible for Puritanism; that is to say, it was his influence more than any other that had given the Jewish Scriptures their weight in the Christian scheme. It seemed to Hugh to be a terrible calamity that he had reserved, so to speak, a place in the chariot of Christ for the Jewish dispensation; it was the firm belief in the vital inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures that had produced that harsh and grim type of Christianity so dear to the Puritan heart. With the exception of certain of the Psalms, certain portions of Job and of the Prophets, there seemed to Hugh to be little in the Old Testament that did not merely hamper and encumber the religion of Christ. What endless and inextricable difficulties arose from trying to harmonise the conception of the Father as preached by Christ, with the conception of the vindictive, wrathful, national, local Deity of the Old Testament. How little countenance did Christ ever give to that idea! He did not even think of the Temple as a house of sacrifice, but as a house of prayer! How seldom He alluded to the national history! How human and temporary a character He gave to the Law of Moses! How

constantly He appealed to personal rather than to national aspirations! How He seemed to insist upon the fact that every man must make his religion out of the simplest elements of moral consciousness! How often He appealed to the poetry of symbols rather than to the effectiveness of ceremony! How little claim He laid, at least in the Synoptic Gospels, to any divinity, and then rather in virtue of His perfect humanity! He called Himself the Son of Man; in the only recorded prayer He gave to His disciples, there was no hint that prayer should be directed to Himself; it was all centred upon the Father.

Here again the Aristotelian method, the delight in analysis, the natural human desire to make truth precise and complete, had intruded itself. What was the Athanasian creed but an Aristotelian formula, making a hard dogma out of a dim mystery? The outcome of it all for Hugh was the resolution that for himself, at all events, his business was to disregard temptation to formularise his position. With one's limited vision, one's finite inability to touch a thought at more than one point at a time, one must give up all hope of attaining to a perfected philosophical system. The end was dark, the solution incomprehensible. He must rather live as far as possible in a high and lofty emo-

tion, beholding the truth by hints and glimpses, pursuing as far as possible all uplifting intuitions, all free and generous desires. It was useless to walk in a prescribed path, to frame one's life on the model of another's ideal. He must be open-minded, ready to revise his principles in the light of experience. He must hold fast to what brought him joy and peace. How restful after all it was to know that one had one's own problem, one's own conditions! All that was necessary was to put one's self firmly and constantly in harmony with the great purpose that had set one exactly where one was, and given one a temperament, a character; good and evil desires, hopes, longings, temptations, aspirations. One could not escape from them, thank God. If one only desired God's will, one's sins and sufferings as well as one's hopes and joys all worked together to a far-off end. One must go straight forward, in courage and patience and love.

XII

HUGH made friends at Cambridge with a young Roman Catholic priest, who was working there.

His new friend was a very simple-minded man; he seemed to Hugh the only man of great gifts he had ever known, who was absolutely untouched by any shadow of worldliness. Hugh knew of men who resisted the temptations of the world very successfully, to whom indeed they were elementary temptations, long since triumphed over; but this man was the only man he had ever known who was gifted with qualities that commanded the respect and admiration of the world, yet to whom the temptations of ambition and success seemed never to have appeared even upon the distant horizon. He was an interesting talker, a fine preacher, and a very accomplished writer; but his interest was entirely centred upon his work, and not upon the rewards of it. He was very poor; but he had no regard for anything—luxury, power, position—that the world could give him. He

had no wish to obtain influence; he only cared to make the work on which he was engaged as perfect as he could. The man was really an artist pure and simple; he seemed to have little taste for pastoral work.

One day they sat together, on a hot breathless afternoon, in a college garden, on a seat beneath some great shady chestnut-trees, and looked out lazily upon the heavy-seeded grass of the meadow and the bright flower borders. The priest said to Hugh suddenly, "I have often wondered what your religion really is. Do you mind my speaking of it? You seem to me exactly the sort of man who needs a strong and definite faith to make him happy."

Hugh smiled and said, "Well, I am trying, not very successfully I fear, to find out what I really do believe. I am trying to construct my faith from the bottom; and I am anxious not to put into the foundations any faulty stones, anything that I have not really tested."

"That is a very good thing to do," said the priest. "But how are you setting to work?"

"Well," said Hugh, "I have never had time before to think my religion out; I seem to have accepted all kinds of loose ideas and shaky traditions. I want to arrive at some certainties; I try to apply a severe intellectual test to

everything: and the result is that I seem obliged to discard one thing after another that I once believed."

"Perhaps," said the priest after a silence, "you are doing this too drastically? Religion, it seems to me, has to be apprehended in a different region, the mystical region, the region of intuition rather than logic."

"Yes," said Hugh, "and intuitions are what one practically lives by; but I think that they ought to be able to stand an intellectual test too—for, after all, it is only intellectually that one can approach them."

The priest shook his head at this, with a half-smile. And Hugh added, "I wish you would give me a short sketch, in a few words if you can, of how you reached your present position."

"That is not very easy," said the priest; "but I will try." He sat for a moment silent, and then he said, "When one looks back into antiquity, before the coming of Christ, one sees a general searching after God in the world; the one idea that seems to run through all religions is the idea of sacrifice—a coarse and brutal idea originally, perhaps; but the essence of it is that there is such a thing as sinfulness, and such a thing as atonement; and that only through death can life be reached. The Jews came nearest to the idea of a personal God:

and the sacrificial system is seen in its fullest perfection with them. Then, in the wise counsels of God, it came about that our Saviour was born a Jew. You will say that I beg the question here; but approaching the subject intellectually, one satisfies one's self that the purest and completest religion that the world has ever seen was initiated by Him; it is impossible, in the light of that religion, not to feel that one must give the greatest weight to the credentials which such a teacher put forward; and we find that the claim that He made was that He was Himself Very God. The moment that one realises that, one also realises that there is no *primâ facie* impossibility that God should so reveal Himself—for indeed it seems an idea which no human mind would dare to originate, except in a kind of insane delusion; and the teaching of Christ, His utter modesty and meekness, His perfect sanity and clear-sightedness, make it evident to me that we may put out of court the possibility that He was under the influence of a delusion. He, it seems to me, took all the old vague ideas of sacrifice and consummated them; He showed that the true spirit was there, hidden under the ancient sacrifices; that one must offer one's best freely to God; and in this spirit He gave Himself to suffering and death. He founded a society with

a definite constitution; He provided it with certain simple rules, and said that, when He was gone it would be inspired and developed by the workings of His Spirit. He left this society as a witness in the world; it has developed in many ways, holding its own, gaining strength, winning adherents in a marvellous manner. And I look upon the Church as the witness to God in the world; I accept its developments as the developments of the Spirit. I see many things in it which I cannot comprehend; but then the whole world is full of mysteries—and the mysteries of the Church I accept in a tranquil faith. I have put it, I fear, very clumsily and awkwardly; but that is the outline of my belief—and it seems to me to interpret the world and its secrets, not perfectly indeed, but more perfectly than any other theory."

"I see!" said Hugh, "but I will tell you at once my initial difficulty. I grant at the outset that the teaching of Christ is the purest and best religious teaching that the world has ever seen; but I look upon Him, not as the founder of a system, but as the most entire individualist that the world has ever known. It seems to me that all His teaching was directed to the end that we should believe in God as a loving Father, and regard all men as brothers; the principle which was to direct His followers was

to be the principle of perfect love, and I think that His idea was that, if men could accept that, everything else mattered little. They must live their lives with that intuition to guide them; the Church seems to me but the human spoiling and complicating of that great simple idea. I look round and see other religious systems of the world—Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and the rest. In each I see a man of profound religious ideals, whose system has been adopted, and then formalised and vitiated by his followers. I do not see that there is anything to make me believe that the same process has not taken place in Christianity. The elaborate system of dogma and doctrine seems to me a perfectly natural human process of trying to turn ideas, essentially poetical, into definite and scientific truths, and half its errors to arise from feeling the necessity of reconciling and harmonising ideas, which I have described as poetical, which were never meant to be reconciled or harmonised. And then there is the added difficulty that, owing to the system of the Church, the ideas of the earliest Christian teachers, like St. Paul, have been accepted as infallible too; and hence arises the dilemma of having to bring into line a whole series of statements, made, as in St. Paul's case, by a man of intense emotion, which are neither consistent

with each other, nor, in all cases, with the teaching of Christ. My idea of Christianity is to get as close to Christ's own teaching as possible. I do not concern myself with the historical accuracy of the Gospel narratives, or even with the incidents there recorded. Those records are the work of men of very imperfect education, and feeble intellectual grasp, in the grip of the prejudices and beliefs of their age. But their very imperfection makes me feel more strongly the august personality of Christ, because the principles, which they represent Him as maintaining, seem to me to be entirely beyond anything that they could themselves have originated. It seems to me, if I discern Christ rightly—speaking of Him now purely as a man—that if He could return to the earth, and be confronted with the system of any of the Churches that bear His name, He would declare it to be all a horrible mistake. It seems to me that what He aimed at was a strictly individualistic system, an attitude of sincerity, simplicity, and loving-kindness, free from all formalism (which He seems to have detested above everything), and free, too, from all elaborate and metaphysical dogma. Instead of this, He would find that men had seized upon the letter, not the spirit, of His teaching, and had devised a

huge mundane organisation, full of pomp and policy, elaborate, severe, hard, unloving. Now if I apply my intellectual tests to the central truths of Christianity, such as the law of Love, the power of self-sacrifice, the brotherhood of men, they stand the test; they seem to contain a true apprehension of the needs of the world, of the methods by which the happiness of humanity may be attained. But when I apply the intellectual test to the superstructure of any Church, there are innumerable doctrines which appear to me to be contrary to reason. It is difficult indeed, in this world of mystery, to affirm that any mystical claim is not true, but such claims ought not to appear to be repugnant to reason, but to confirm the processes of reason, in a region to which reason cannot scientifically and logically attain. Such doctrines, for instance, as prayers to saints for their intercession, or the efficacy of masses for the dead, seem to me to have a certain poetical beauty about them, but to be contrary both to reason and experience. I do not see the slightest hint of them in the teaching of Christ, or anything which can be taken as giving them any support whatever. They seem to me purely human fancies, hardened into a painful mechanical form, which forfeit all claim to be inspired by the Spirit of Christ. But

I must apologise for giving you such an harangue—still, you brought it on yourself."

The priest smiled quietly. "I quite see your point," he said, "and we are at one in your main position; the difficulty of the Church is that it has to organise its system for people of all kinds of temperament, and at all stages of development. But the spirit is there—and if one lets go of the letter, the grasp of many human beings is so weak that they tend to lose the spirit. The Church no doubt appears to many to be over-organised, over-definite, but that is a practical difficulty which every system which has to deal with large masses of people is confronted with. It is the same with education; boys have to do many definite and precise things which seem at the time to have no educational value; but at the end of their time they see the need of these processes."

Hugh laughed. "I wish they did!" he said; "my own belief is that, in education as well as in religion, we want more individualism, more elasticity. I think it is very doubtful whether great ideas, rigidly interpreted and mechanically enforced, have any value at all for undeveloped minds; the whole secret lies in their being liberally and freely apprehended."

"What really divides us," said the priest—"and I do not think we are very far apart—is

my belief that God has not left the world without a definite witness to Himself—which I believe the Church to be."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I believe that the Church is a witness to God: any system which teaches pure morality is that; but I could not limit His witness to a single system; Nature, beauty, music, poetry, art—to say nothing of sweet and kindly persons—they are all the witnesses of His spirit; and the Church is, in my belief, simply hampered and restricted from doing what she might, by the woful rigidity, the mechanical and hard precision, which she has imported into the spiritual region. The moment that the liberty of the spirit is restricted, and grace is made to flow in definite traditional channels, that moment the stream loses its force and brightness."

"I should rather believe," said the priest, "that, with all the obvious disadvantages of organisation, left to itself, the stream welters into a shapeless marsh, instead of making glad the City of God! And may I say that you, and those like you, with ardent spiritual instincts, make the mistake of thinking that we exclude you; indeed it is not so. You would find the yoke as easy and the burden as light as ever. In submission you would gain and not lose the liberty of which you are in search."

The priest soon after this took his leave. Hugh sat long pondering, as the evening faded into dusk. Was there no certainty, then, attainable? And the answer of his own spirit was that no ready-made certainty was of avail; that a man must begin from the beginning, and construct his own faith from the foundation; that reason must play its part, lead the soul as far as it could, and set it in the right way; but that the spirit must not halt there, but pass courageously and serenely into the trackless waste, content, if need be, to make mistakes, to retrace its path, only sincerely and gently advancing, waiting for any hint that might fall from the Divine Spirit, interpreting rather than selecting, divesting itself of preferences and prejudices one by one, and conscious that One waited, smiling and encouraging, but a little ahead upon the road, and that any turn in the path might reveal his bright coming to the faithful eye.

XIII

THE charm of the Cambridge life was to Hugh the alternation of society and solitude. He was soon fortunate enough to obtain a post at his old college, and to be allotted a set of rooms there. He was sociably enough inclined, and the stir and movement of the minute society was interesting and enlivening. He had a little definite work to do, and he tried to cultivate relations with every one in the college. It was pleasant that he had no connection with disciplinary matters; and thus he was able to enter into a friendly intercourse with the undergraduates, not checked or hampered by any necessity to find fault or to offer advice. He occupied his rooms during term-time, and lived the life of the college with quiet enjoyment. But he retained his little house as well, and when the vacation began, he retired there, and spent his days much in solitude. He preferred this indeed to the life of the college, but he was well aware that it owed half its pleasure to its being an interlude in the busier life. But

it was thus that what he felt were his best thoughts came to him; thoughts, that is to say, that pierced below the surface, and had a quality of reality which his mind, when he was employed and full of schemes, often seemed to himself to lack. But, like all speculative people who spend much time in solitary thought, he seemed to himself very soon to cross the debatable ground in which people of definite religious views appeared to him to linger gladly. Here he left behind all the persons who depended upon systems. Here remained Roman Catholics, who depended chiefly upon the authority and tradition of the Church, and Protestants depending no less blindly and complacently upon the authority of the Bible. The real and crucial difficulty lay further on; and it was simply this: he saw a world full of joy, and full too of suffering; sometimes one of his fellow-pilgrims would be stricken down with some incurable malady, and through slow gradations of pain, sink wretchedly to death; was this suffering remedial, educative, benevolent? He hoped it was, he believed that it was, in the sense, at least, that he could not bear to feel that it might not be; but however ardently and eagerly he might try to believe it, there was always the dark alternative that pain might not be either remedial or educative; there was the

terrible possibility that identity and personal consciousness were absolutely extinguished by death, for there was no sort of evidence to the contrary; and if this was the case, what remained of all human belief, philosophies, and creeds? They might simply be beautiful dreams, adorable mistakes, exquisite fallacies: but they could supply no inspiration for life, unless there was an element of absolute certainty about them, which was just the element that they lacked; and, in any case, the sad fact that such certainties as men professed differed from and even contradicted each other, introduced a new bewilderment upon the scene. A Romanist maintained the absolute divinity of the Church; a Protestant maintained the absolute reliability of the Bible; both of these could not be true, because in many points they contravened each other; the authority of the Church contradicted the authority of the Bible, while neither was perfectly consistent even with itself. They could not both be true, and Hugh was forced to believe that the point in which they were both in error was in their claim to any absolute certainty at all. The conclusion seemed to be that one must take refuge in a perfect sincerity, not formulate one's hopes as beliefs, but wait for light, and keep the eyes of the mind open to all indications of any kind—

that one must, in the words of the old wise proverb, be ready to begin one's life afresh many times, in the light of any new knowledge, any hint of truth. And thus one kind of happiness became impossible for Hugh, the happiness that comes of absolute certainty, when one may take a thing for granted, and not argue any more about it; that was the sort of happiness which many of his friends seemed to him to attain; and if life did indeed end with death, it was probably the best practical system to adopt; but Hugh could not adopt it; and therefore the only happiness he could expect was a candid and patient waiting upon truth, a welcoming of any new experience with a balanced and eager mind. To some a human love, a human passion, seemed the one satisfying thing, but this was denied to Hugh and the only thing in his life which was of the nature of a passion was the sight of the beautiful world about him, which appealed to him day by day with a hundred delicate surprises, unnumbered novelties of rapture. He realised that the one thing that he dreaded was a cold tranquillity, uncheered by hope, unresponsive to beauty.

He rode one day, in the height of summer, for miles across the fenland. To left and right lay the huge plain with its wide fields, its soli-

tary trees; to his left, between grassy flood-banks, ran the straight reedy river, full to-day of the little yellow water-lily, golden stars rising from the cool floating leaves; far ahead ran a low wooded ridge, with house-roofs clustering round a fantastic church tower, with a crown of pinnacles. Cattle grazed peacefully, and the whole scene was brimful of sweet passionless life, ineffable content. If he could only have shared it! Yet the sight of it all filled him with a sweet hopefulness; he travelled on, a lonely pilgrim, eager and wistful, desiring knowledge and love and serenity. He felt that they were waiting, certainly waiting; that they were tenderly and wisely withheld. That was the nearest that he could come to his heart's desire.

XIV

It was always a great pleasure to Hugh to explore an unfamiliar countryside, and the same pleasure was derivable to a certain extent from railway travelling, though the vignettes that one saw from the windows of a swiftly-rolling train were so transitory and so numerous, that one had soon the same sense of fatigue that comes from turning over a book of photographs, or from visiting a picture-gallery. If one explored the country in a leisurely manner it was less fatiguing, because one could taste the savour of a sight at one's ease. Hugh came to the conclusion, as life advanced, that he preferred a landscape on which humanity had set its mark to a landscape of a pure, natural wildness, though that indeed had a beauty of its own, a more solemn beauty, though not so near to the heart. But the great red-brick house, peering through its sun-blinds, among the flower-beds, with a rookery behind in the tall trees of a grove, and the cupola of stable-buildings among the shrubberies, that one saw in a flash as the train

emerged from the low cutting; or the tiled roofs of houses, with an old mouldering church-tower peering out above them, in a gap between green downs; or a quiet manor-house among pastures, seen at the close of day when the shadows began to lengthen, gave him a sense of the long succession of peaceable lives—the boy returning from school to the familiar home, or the old squire, after a life of pleasant activities, walking among the well-known fields, and knowing that he must soon make haste to be gone and leave his place for others. There was a sense of romance and pathos about it all; and the scenes thus unfolded suddenly before his eyes were dear to him because they had been dear to others, and stood for so much old tenderness and anxious love. There was always, too, a feeling in his mind of how easy, how sweet and tranquil, life would be under such conditions. Seen from outside, certain lives, lived in beautiful surroundings and tinged with seemly traditions, seemed to have a romantic quality, even in their sufferings and sorrows. No amount of experience, no accumulation of the certainty that life was interwoven with a sordid and dreary fibre, seemed ever to dispel this illusion, just as sorrows and miseries depicted in a book or in a drama appeared to have a romance about them which, seen from inside,

they lacked. There were in Hugh's own memory a few places and a few houses, where by some happy fortune the hours had always been touched with this poetical quality, and into which no touch of dreariness had ever entered. Something of the same romance lingered for Hugh over certain of the colleges at Cambridge. To wander through their courts, to read the mysterious names inscribed over unknown doors, to think of the long succession of inmates, grave or light-hearted, that lived within, either for a happy space of youth, or through long quiet years; this never ceased to communicate to him a certain thrill of emotion.

The only period of his life that seemed to Hugh to lack this quality of poetry were the years of his official life in London, the years that the locust had eaten. He did not grudge having spent them so, for they had given a sort of solidity and gravity to life; but now that he was free to live as he chose, he determined that he would, if he could, so spend his days, that there should be as little as possible of this dull and ugly quality intermixed with them; the sadness and incompleteness of countless lives seemed to Hugh to arise from the fact that so many men settled down to mechanical toil, which first robbed them of their freshness, and then routine became essential to them. But

Hugh determined that neither his work nor his occupation should have this sunless and dismal quality; that he would deliberately eschew the things that brought him dreariness, and the people who took a mean and conventional view; that he would not take up, in a spirit of heavy rectitude, work for which he knew himself to be unfit; and that such mechanical work as he felt bound to undertake should be regarded by him in the light of a tonic, which should enable him to return to his chosen work with a sense of gladness and relief.

This would demand a certain sustained effort, he foresaw. But whatever qualities he possessed, he knew that he could reckon upon a vital impatience of things that were dull and common; moreover it was possible to determine that, whatever happened, he would not do things in a dull way; so much depended upon how they were handled and executed. One of the dullest things in the world was the multiplication of unnecessary business. So many people made the mistake of thinking that by minute organisation the success of a system could be guaranteed. Hugh knew that the real secret was to select the right personalities, and to leave systems elastic and simple, and that thus the best results were achieved; the most depressing thing in the world was a dull person administer-

ing faithfully an elaborate system; one of the most inspiring sights was an original man making the best of a bad system.

And so Hugh resolved that he would bring to his task, his leisure, his relations with others, his exits and entrances, his silence and his speech, a freshness and a zest, not directed to surprising or interesting others—that was the most vulgar expedient of all—but with a deliberate design to transmute, as by the touch of the magical stone, the common materials of life into pure gold. He would endeavour to discern the poetical quality in everything and in every one. In inanimate things this was easy enough, for they were already full of pungent distinctness, of subtle difference; it was all there, waiting merely to be discerned. With people it was different, because there were so many who stared solemnly and impenetrably, who repelled one with remarks about the weather and the events of the day, as a man repels a barge with a pole. With such people it would be necessary to try a number of conversational flies over the surface of the sleeping pool, in the hope that some impulse, some pleasant trait would dart irresistibly to the surface, and be hauled struggling ashore. Hugh had seen, more than once, strange, repressed, mournful things looking out of the guarded

eyes of dreary persons; and it would be his business to entice these to the light. He determined, too, to cultivate the art of being alone. There were many people in the world who found themselves the poorest of all company, and Hugh resolved that he would find his own society the most interesting of all; he would not be beaten by life, as so many people appeared to him to be. Of course, he knew that there were threatening clouds in the sky, that in a moment might burst and drench the air with driving rain. But Hugh hoped that his attitude of curiosity and wonder could find food for high-hearted reflection even there. The universe teemed with significance, and if God had bestowed such a quality with rich abundance everywhere, there must be a still larger store of it in His own eternal heart. The world was full of surprises; trees drooped their leaves over screening walls, houses had backs as well as fronts; music was heard from shuttered windows, lights burned in upper rooms. There were a thousand pretty secrets in the ways of people to each other. Then, too, there were ideas, as thick as sparrows in an ivied wall. One had but to clap one's hands and cry out, and there was a fluttering of innumerable wings; life was as full of bubbles, forming, rising into amber foam, as a glass of sparkling

wine. That cup he would drink, and try its savour. There would be times when he would flag, no doubt, but it should not be from any failure of desire. He would try to be temperate, so as to keep the inner eye unclouded; and he would try to be perfectly simple and sincere, deciding questions on their own merits, and with no conventional judgment. Such an attitude might be labelled by peevish persons, with prejudices rather than preferences, a species of intellectual Epicureanism. But Hugh desired not to limit his gaze by the phenomena of life, but to keep his eyes fixed upon the further horizon; the light might dawn when it was least expected; but the best chance of catching the first faint lights of that other sunrise, was to have learned expectancy, to have trained observation, and to have kept one's heart unfettered and undimmed.

He saw that the first essential of all was to group his life round a centre of some kind, to have a chosen work, to which he should be vowed as by a species of consecration; it was in choosing their life-work, he thought, that so many people failed. He saw men of high ability, year after year, who continued to put off the decision as to what their work should be, until they suddenly found themselves confronted with the necessity of earning their

living, and then their choice had to be made in a hurry; they pushed the nearest door open and went in; and then habit began to forge chains about them; and soon, however uncongenial their life might be, they were incapable of abandoning it. There were some melancholy instances at Cambridge of men of high intellectual power, who had drifted thus into the academical life without any aptitude for it, without educational zeal, without interest in young people. Such men went on tamely year after year, passing from one college office to another, inadequately paid, with no belief in the value of their work, averse to trying experiments, fond of comfort, only anxious to have as little trouble as possible, expending their ingenuity of mind in academical meetings, criticising the verbal expression of reports with extreme subtlety, too fastidious to design original work, too much occupied for patient research, and ending either in a bitter sense of unrecognised merit, or in a frank and unashamed indolence.

Hugh saw that in choosing the work of one's life, one must not be guided by necessity, or even mere rectitude. Work embraced from a sense of duty was like driving a chariot in sea-sand. One must have an enthusiasm for one's task, and a delight in it; for only by enjoyment

of the results could one tolerate the mechanical labour inseparable from all intellectual toil. It was true that he had himself drifted into official duties, but here Hugh saw the guidance of a very tender providence, which had provided him with a species of discipline that he could never have spontaneously practised. His great need had been the application of some hardening and hammering process, such as should give him that sort of concentrated alertness which his education had failed to bestow; and none the less tenderly provided, it seemed to Hugh, was the irresistible impulse to arise and go, which had come upon him when the process was completed. And now he was free, with an immense appetite for speculation, for intellectual pleasure, for the criticism of life, for observation. It was the quality, the finer essence of things and thoughts that mattered. To some was given the desire to organise and manage the world, to others the instinct for perception, for analysis, for the development of ideas. It was not that one kind of work was better than the other; both were needed, both were noble; but Hugh had no doubt on which side of the battle he was himself meant to fight. And so he determined that he would devote his life to the work, and that he would not allow any excessive intrusion of extraneous elements. The

blessing of the academical life was that it entailed a certain amount of social intercourse; it compelled one to come into contact with a large variety of people. Without this Hugh felt that his outlook would have become narrow and self-centred. He knew of course that there would be times when it would seem to him that his life was an ineffective one, when he would envy the men of affairs, when he would wonder what, after all, his own performance amounted to. But Hugh felt that the great lack of many lives was the failure to perceive the interest of ideas; that many men and women went through existence in a dull and mechanical way, raking together the straws and dust of the street; and he thought that a man might do a great work if he could put a philosophy of life into an accessible shape. The great need was the need of simplification; the world was full of palpitating interests, of beauty, of sweetness, of delight. But many people had no criterion of values; they filled their lives with petty engagements, and smilingly lamented that they had no time to think or read. For such people the sun rose over dewy fields, in the freshness of the countryside, in vain: in vain, the sunset glared among the empurpled cloud-banks; in vain, the moon rose pale over the hushed garden-walks, while the nightingale, hidden in the

dark heart of the bush, broke into passionate song. And even if it were argued that it was possible to be sensible and virtuous without being responsive to the appeal of nature, what did such people make of their social life? they made no excursions into the hearts and minds of others; their religion was a conventional thing; they went to concerts, where the violins thrilled with sweet passion, and the horns complained with a lazy richness, that they might chatter in gangways and nod to their friends. It was all so elaborate, so hollow! and yet in the minds of these buzzing, voluble persons one could generally discern a trickle of unconventional feeling, which could have made glad the sun-scorched pleasance.

Hugh determined with all his might that he would try to preach this simple gospel; that he would praise and uphold the doctrine of sincerity, of appreciation, of joy. He made up his mind that he would not be drawn into the whirlpool, that he would intermingle long spaces of eager solitude with his life, that he would meditate, reflect, enjoy; that he would try to discern the significance of all things seen or felt, and practise a disposition to approach all phenomena, whether pleasant or painful, in a critical mood; and at the same time he resolved that his criticism should not be a mere solvent; that

he would strive to discern not the dulness, the ugliness, the dreariness of life, but its ardours, its passions, its transporting emotions, its beauties. That was a task for a lifetime. Whatever was doubtful, this was certain, that one was set in a mysterious, attractive, complex place; if one regarded it carelessly, it seemed a commonplace affair enough, full of material activities, dull necessities, foolish stirrings, low purposes; but if one looked a little closer, there were strange, dim, beautiful figures moving in and out, evanescent and shadowy, behind the nearer and more distracting elements. Here was hope, with a far-off gaze, beauty with mournful yearning eyes, love with finger on lip and dreamful gaze. It was here that the larger, the holier life lay. What was necessary was to keep apart, with deliberate purpose, from all fruitless vexations, dull anxieties, sordid designs. To detach one's self not from life, but from the scum and foam of life; to realise that the secret lay in the middle of it all, and that it was to be discerned not by fastidious abstention, not by chilly asceticism, but by welcoming all nobler impulses, all spiritual influences; not by starving body or mind, but by selecting one's food carefully and temperately. If a man, Hugh thought, could live life in this spirit, reasonable, kindly, humble, sincere, he

could encourage others to the same simplicity of aim. To be selfish was to miss the beauty of the whole; for the essence of the situation was to reveal to others, by example and by precept, what they already so dimly knew.

To find out what one could do, where one could help, and to work with all one's might; to live strongly and purely; not to be dissuaded by comment or discouraged by lack of sympathy; to meet others simply and frankly; to be more desirous to ascertain other points of view than to propound one's own; not to be ashamed to speak unaffectedly of one's own admirations and hopes; not to desire recognition; not to yield to personal motives; not to assent to conventional principles blindly, nor to dissent from them mechanically; never to be contemptuous or intolerant; to foresee contingencies and not to be deterred by them; to be open to all impressions; to be tender to all sincere scruples; not to be censorious or hasty; not to anticipate opposition; to be neither timid nor rash; to seek peace; to be gentle rather than conscientious; to be appreciative rather than critical—on these lines Hugh wished to live; he desired no deference, no personal domination; but neither did he wish to reject responsibility if he were consulted and trusted. Above all things he hoped to

resist the temptation of taking soundings, of calculating his successes. Fame and renown allured him, none but he could say how much; but he knew in his heart that he contemned their specious claims, and he hoped that they would some day cease to trouble him. He knew that much depended upon health and vigour; but on the other hand, he believed that the most transforming power in the world was the desire to be different: why he could not stride into his kingdom and realise his ideal all at once, he could not divine; but meanwhile he would desire the best, and look forward in confidence and hope.

XV

HUGH was seized, one bright February morning of clear sun and keen winds, with a sudden weariness of his work, This rebellious impulse did not often visit him, because he loved his work very greatly, and there were no hours so happy as those which were so engaged. But to-day he thought of himself suddenly that, lost thus in his delightful labour, he was forgetting to live. How strange it was that the hours one loved most were the hours of work that sped past unconsciously, when one stood apart, absorbed in dreams, from the current of things. It seemed to him as if he was like the Lady of Shalott, so intent upon her web and the weaving of it, that she thought of the moving forms upon the road beyond the river merely as things that could be depicted in her coloured threads. He took up the *Pilgrim's Progress* and sat a long while reading it, and smiling as he read; he wondered why so many critics spoke so slightingly of the second part, which seemed to him in some ways almost more

beautiful than the first. There was not perhaps quite the same imaginativeness or zest; but there was more instinctive art, because the writer was retracing the same path, lodging at the same grave houses, encountering the same terrors, and yet representing everything as mirrored in a different quality of mind; the mind of a faithful woman, and of the boys and maidens who walked with her upon the pilgrimage. There was not quite the same romance, perhaps, but there was more tenderness than sweetness. It came less from the mind and more from the heart.

Hugh smiled to see how rapidly the dangers of the road must have diminished, if Mr. Greatheart had often convoyed a party on their way. That mighty man laid about him with such valour, sliced off the heads and arms of giants with such cordial good-humour, that there could hardly, Hugh thought, have been for the next company any adventures left at all. Moreover so many of the stubborn and ill-favoured persons had come by a bad end, were hung in chains by the road, or lying pierced with sorrows, that later pilgrims would have to complain of lack of bracing incidents. Still, how delicate and gentle a journey it was, and with what caressing fondness the writer helped these young and faltering feet along the way. What

pretty and absurd sights they saw! How laden they were with presents! Christiana had Mr. Skill's boxes, twelve in all, of medicine, with no doubt a vial or two of tears of repentance to wash the pills down; she had bottles of wine, parched corn, figs, and raisins from the Lord of the place, to say nothing of the golden anchor which the maidens gave her, which must have impeded her movements.

He read with a smile, which was not wholly one of amusement, Mr. Greatheart's admirable argument as to how the process of redemption was executed. The Redeemer, it seemed, had no less than four kinds of righteousness, three to keep, which he could not do without, and one kind to give away. Every detail of the case was supported by a little cluster of marginal texts, and no doubt it appeared as logical and simple to the author as a problem or an equation. But what an extraordinary form of religion it all was! There was not the least misgiving in the mind of the author. The Bible was to him a perfectly unquestioned manifesto of the mind of God, and solved everything and anything. And yet the whole basis of the pilgrimage was insecure. There was no free gift of grace at all. Some few fortunate people were started on the pilgrimage by being given an overpowering desire to set out, while the

pleasant party who met at Madam Wanton's house, Mr. Lightmind and Mr. Love-the-flesh, with Mr. Lechery and Mrs. Filth, and passed the afternoon with music and dancing, were troubled by no divine misgivings.

Then, too, the Lord of the way found no difficulty in easing the path of the gentler sort of pilgrims. He kept the Valley of the Shadow comparatively quiet for Christiana and her tender band. The ugly thing that came to meet them, and the Lion that padded after them, were not suffered to draw near. The hobgoblins were stayed from howling. It never seemed to have occurred to Bunyan to question why the Lord of the way had ever allowed this unhallowed crew to gather in the valley at all. If he could restrain them, and if Mr. Greatheart could hew the giants in pieces, why could not the whole nest of hornets have been smoked out once and for all? Even the Slough of Despond could not be mended with all the cartloads of promises and texts that were shot there. And yet for all that, when one came to reflect upon it, this Calvinistic scheme of election and reprobation did seem to correspond in a terrible manner with the phenomena of the world. One saw people around one, some of whom seemed to start with an instinct for all that was pure and noble, and again others

seemed to begin with no preference for virtue at all, but to be dogged with inherited corruption from the outset. The mistake which moralists made was to treat all alike, as if all men had the moral instinct equally developed; and yet Hugh had met not a few men who were restrained by absolutely no scruples, except prudential ones, and the dread of incurring conventional penalties, from yielding to every bodily impulse. If truth and purity and unselfishness were the divine things, if happiness lay there, why were there such multitudes of people created who had no implanted desire to attain to these virtues?

It was in the grip of such thoughts that Hugh left the house and walked alone through the streets of the town, as Christian might have walked in the City of Destruction. What was one to fly from? and whither was the pilgrimage to tend? The streets were full of busy comfortable people, some, like Mr. Brisk, men of considerable breeding, some again, like the two ill-favoured ones, marked for doom; here and there was a young woman whose name might have been Dull. What was one's duty in the matter? Was one indeed to repent, with groans and cries, for a corruption of heart that had been bestowed upon one without any choice of one's own? Was one

bound to overwhelm one's companions with abundance of pious suggestions, to rebuke vice, to rejoice in the disasters that befell the ungodly? It seemed a hopeless business from first to last; of course, if one had Bunyan's simple faith, if one could believe that at a certain moment, on the Hill of Calvary, a thing had been accomplished which had in an instant changed the whole scheme of the world; that a wrathful Creator, possessed hitherto by a fierce and vindicative anger with the frail creatures whom he moulded by thousands from the clay, was in an instant converted into a tender and compassionate father, his thirst for vengeance satisfied, it would be plain enough; but Hugh felt in the depths of his heart that whatever else might be true, that was not; or at least if it had any semblance of truth in it, it simply consummated a mystery so appalling that one must merely resign all hope and courage.

What could one make of a Gospel that could lend any colour to a theory such as this? Was it the fault of the Gospel, or was the error rooted in human nature, a melancholy misinterpretation of a high truth? It seemed to Hugh that the mistake lay there; it seemed to arise from the acceptance by the Puritans of the Bible as all one book, and by the deliberate extrusion of the human element from it. Christ,

in the Gospel, seemed to teach, so far as Hugh could understand, not that he had effected any change in the nature or disposition of God, but that He had always been a Father of men, full of infinite compassion and love; the miracle of Christ's life was the showing how a Divine spirit, bound by all the sad limitations of mortality, could yet lead a life of inner peace and joy, a life of perfect trust and simplicity. The clouding of the pure Gospel came from the vehement breath of His interpreters. His later interpreters were men in whose minds was instinctively implanted the old harsh doctrine of man's perverse corruption, and the dark severity of God's justice; and thus the Puritans were misled, because they laid an equal stress upon the whole of the Bible, and spoke of it as all of equal and Divine authority. Instead of rejecting, as faulty human conceptions, what did not harmonise with the purer Gospel light, they sought and found in the Gospel a confirmation of the older human view. They treated the whole collection of books as all equally true, all equally important, and thus they were bent on seeing that the Gospel should fulfil rather than supersede the Law. This was in part the spirit of St. Paul; and thus the Puritan Gospel was the Gospel of the Saviour. To Hugh the Old Testament was a very wonderful

thing, wonderful because it showed the rise of a spirit of personal righteousness in the world, a spirit that worshipped morality with the same vehemence and enthusiasm as that with which the Greeks worshipped beauty. And thus because they had loved righteousness and hated iniquity, there had been given to their imperious nation the reward that the humanity of their race should be chosen to enshrine the Divine spirit of the Saviour.

Hugh felt that the weakness of the ecclesiastical position was its obstinate refusal to admit the possibilities of future development. A century ago, a man who ventured to hint that the story of Noah's Ark might not be historically and exactly true would have been pronounced a dangerous heretic. Now no one was required to affirm his belief in it. Nowadays the belief in the miraculous element even of the New Testament was undoubtedly weakening. Yet the orthodox believer still pronounced a Christian unsound who doubted it.

Here lay the insecurity of the orthodox champions. They stumbled on, fully accepting, when they could not help themselves, the progressive developments of thought, yet loudly condemning any one who was a little further ahead upon the road, until they had caught him up.

Still, the old Puritan poet, for all his over-preciseness of definition, all his elaborate scheme of imputed righteousness, all his dreary metaphysics, had yet laid his hand upon the essential truth. Life was indeed a pilgrimage; and as the new law, the law of science, was investigated and explored, it seemed hardly less arbitrary, hardly more loving than the old. It was a scheme of infinite delay; no ardent hopes, no burning conceptions of justice and truth could hasten or retard the working of the inflexible law, which blessed without reference to goodness, and punished without reference to morality. No one could escape by righteousness, no man could plead his innocence or his ignorance. One was surrounded by inexplicable terrors, one's path was set with gins and snares. Here the smoke and the flame burst forth, or the hobgoblins roared in concert; here was a vale of peace, or a house of grave and kindly entertainment; and sometimes from the hill-tops or the land of Beulah, there seemed indeed to be a radiant vision, dim-descried, of towers and pearly gates, a high citadel of heavenly peace. But how little one learned even of one's own strength and weakness! The one instinct, which might itself be a delusion, was that one had a choice in the matter, a will, a power to act or to refrain from acting; there was a deep-seated impulse to fare

onward, to hope, to struggle. It was useless to blame the mysterious conditions of the journey, for they were certainly there. The only faith that was possible was the belief that the truth was somehow larger, nobler, more beautiful than one could conceive it ought to be; and there was a restfulness, when one apprehended what seemed so dark at first, in the knowledge that one's character and environment alike were not one's own choice; the only way was to keep one's eye fixed upon the furthest hope, and never to cease imploring the Power that made us what we were, to give not abundant, but sufficient, strength, and to guide us into acting, so far as we had power to act, as He willed.

This then became for Hugh his practical religion; to commit himself unceasingly, in joy and trouble alike, in the smallest matters, to the Eternal will; until he grew to feel that if there were anything true in the world, it was the power of that perpetual surrender. It was surprising to him to find how anxiety melted into tranquillity, if one could but do that. Not only, he learned, must great decisions be laid before God, but the smallest acts of daily life. How often one felt the harassing weight of small duties, the distasteful business, the anxious conversation, the dreary occasion; fatigue, disappointment, care, uncertainty, timidity! If one could but put the

matter into the hands of God, instead of rehearsing and calculating and anticipating, what a peace flowed into one's spirit! Difficulties melted away like mist before it. The business was tranquilly accomplished ; the interview that one dreaded provided its own obvious solution, vexations were healed, troubles were suddenly revealed as marvellously unimportant. One blundered still, went perversely wrong, yielded falteringly to an impulse knowing it to be evil ; but even such events had a wholesome humiliation about them which brought healing with it. The essence of the whole situation was to have in one's heart the romance of pilgrimage, to expect experience, both sweet and bitter, to desire the goal rather than the prize ; and to find the jewels of patience, hopefulness, and wisdom by the way, where one had least expected them.

XVI

HUGH, one Sunday, in walking alone outside Cambridge, went for some considerable time behind a party of young men and boys, who were out for a stroll. He observed them with a disgustful curiosity. They were over-dressed; they talked loudly and rudely, and so far as Hugh could hear both coarsely and unamusingly. They laughed boisterously, they made offensive remarks about humble people who passed them. It was the height of humour to push each other unexpectedly into the ditch at the side of the road, and then their laughter became uproarious. It was harmless enough, but it was all so ugly and insolent, that Hugh thought that he had seldom seen anything which was so singularly and supremely unattractive. The performance seemed to have no merit in it from any point of view. These youths were no doubt exulting in the pride of their strength, but the only thing that they really enjoyed was that the people who met them should be disconcerted and distressed. Making every allowance for

thoughtlessness and high spirits, it seemed unnecessary that these qualities should manifest themselves so unpleasingly. Hugh wondered whether, as democracy learned its strength, humanity was indeed becoming more vulgar, more inconsiderate, more odious. Singly, perhaps, these very boys might be sensible and good-humoured people enough, but association seemed only to develop all that was worst in them. And yet they were specimens of humanity at its strongest and cheerfullest. They were the hope of the race —for the same thing was probably going on all over England—and they would no doubt develop into respectable and virtuous citizens; but the spectacle of their joy was one that had no single agreeable feature. These loutish, rowdy, loud-talking, intolerable young men were a blot upon the sweet day, the pleasant countryside. Probably, Hugh thought, there was something sexual beneath it all, and the insolence of the group was in some dim way concerned with the instinct for impressing and captivating the female heart. Perhaps the more demure village maidens who met them felt that there was something dashing and even chivalrous about these young squires.

There came into Hugh's mind the talk of a friend who had been staying with him, a man of

lofty socialistic ideals, who spoke much and eloquently of the worship of humanity. Reflecting upon the phrase, Hugh felt that he could attach no sort of meaning to it. What was the humanity that one was to worship? Was it the glory of the average man? Was it the memory of the past? Was it the possibility of the future? It seemed to Hugh to be an impossible abstraction. He had said as much to his friend, who had replied that it was like the worship of Nature, which Hugh himself practised. But Hugh replied that he did not worship Nature at all. There was much in Nature that he did not understand, much that he feared and disliked. There was an abundance of beautiful things in Nature that he worshipped, not Nature as a whole; there was enough, he said, in Nature that was desirable, to give him a kind of hope that there was some high and beautiful thought behind it; at which his friend became eloquent, veiling, Hugh thought, a great confusion of mind behind a liberal use of rhetoric, and spoke of suffering, toiling, sorrowing, onward-looking humanity, its impassioned relations, its great wistful heart. Hugh again, could not understand him; he thought that his friend formed some exotic and fanciful conception, arrived at by subtracting from humanity all that was not pathetic and solemn and dignified,

and then fusing the residue into a sort of corporeal entity. He did not see any truth or reality about the conception. It seemed to him as unreal as though one had personified the Great Western Railway into a sort of gigantic form, striding westward, covered with packages of merchandise, and carrying a typical human being, as St. Christopher carried the Sacred Child across the flood. It was pure anthropomorphism.

Hugh could understand a personal relation, even the passionate idealisation of an individual. He could conceive of the latter as giving one a higher idea of the possibilities of the human race: but to lump a vast and complex system together, to concentrate unknown races, dead and living, negroes, Chinamen, Homeric heroes and palæolithic men, into one definite conception, and to worship it, seemed to Hugh an almost grotesque thought. He could conceive of a species of Pantheism, in which the object of one's awe and worship was the vast force underlying all existing things; but even so it seemed necessary to Hugh to focus it all into one personal force. The essence of worship seemed to Hugh to be that the thing worshipped should have unity and individuality. It seemed to him as impossible to worship a thing of which he himself was a part, as to

demand that a cat should adore the principle of felinity.

The essence of the world, of life, to Hugh lay in the sense of his own individuality. He was instinctively conscious of his own existence, he was experimentally conscious of the existence of a complicated world outside of him. But it was to him rather a depressing than an ennobling thought, that he was one of a class, fettered by the same disabilities, the same weaknesses, as millions of similar objects. Perhaps it was a wholesome humiliation, but it was none the less humiliating. On the one hand he was conscious of the vast power of imagination, the power of standing, as it were, side by side with God upon the rampart of heaven, and surveying the whole scheme of created things. Yet on the other hand there fell the sense of a baffling and miserable impotence, a despairing knowledge that one's consciousness of the right to live, and to live happily, was conditioned by one's utter frailty, the sense that one was surrounded by a thousand dangers, any one of which might at any moment deprive one of the only thing of which one was sure. How, and by what subtle process of faith and imagination, could the two thoughts be reconciled?

The best that Hugh could make of the ardent

love of life and joy which inspired him, was the belief that it was implanted in man, that he might have, for some inscrutable reason, a motive for experiencing, and for desiring to continue to experience, the strange discipline of the world. If men did not love life and ease so intensely, at the first discouragement, at the first touch of pain, they would languidly and despairingly cease to be. Hugh seemed to discern that men were put into the world that they might apprehend something that it was worth their while to apprehend; that for some reason which he had no means of divining, life could not be a wholly easy or pleasurable thing; but that in order to inspire men to bear pain and unhappiness, they were permeated with an intense desire to continue to live, and to regain some measure of contentment, if that contentment were for a time forfeited. Of course there were many things which that did not explain, but it was a working theory that seemed to contain a large element of truth. Sometimes a technically religious person would say that the world was created for the glory of God, a phrase which filled Hugh with a sense of bewildered disgust. It either implied that God demanded recognition, or that it was all done in a species of intolerable pride of heart, as a mere exhibition of power. That God

should yield to a desire for display seemed to Hugh entirely inconsistent with a belief in His awful supremacy.

It seemed to him rather that God must have abundant cause to be dissatisfied with the world as it was, but that at the same time He must have some overpoweringly just reason for acquiescing for a time in its imperfection. How else could one pray, or aspire, or hope at all?

But the sight of human beings, such as Hugh had before his eyes that day, filled him with perplexity. One was only possessed by an intense desire that they might be different from what they were. Hugh indeed knew that he himself had sore need to be different from what he was. But the qualities that lay behind the motions and speech of these lads—inconsiderateness, indifference to others, vanity, grossness—were the things that he had always been endeavouring to suppress and eradicate in himself; they were the things that were detested by poets, saints, and all chivalrous and generous souls.

Sometimes indeed one was confronted, in the world of men, by a perfectly sincere, noble, quiet, gentle, loving personality; and then one perceived, as in a gracious portrait, what humanity could hope to aspire to. But on the other hand Hugh had seen, in the pages of a

periodical, an attempt to arrive at a typical human face, by photographing a number of individuals upon the same plate; and what a blurred, dim, uncomfortable personality seemed to peer forth! To worship humanity seemed to Hugh like trying to worship that concentrated average; and he had little hope that, if an absolutely average man were constructed, every single living individual contributing his characteristics to the result, the result would be edifying, encouraging, or inspiring. Hugh feared that the type would but sink the most tolerant philosopher in a sense of irreclaimable depression. And yet if, guided by prejudice and preference, one made up a figure that one could wholly admire, how untrue to nature it would be, how different from the figure that other human beings would consent to admire.

The problem was insoluble; the only way was to set one's self courageously at one's own little corner of the gigantic scheme, to attack it as faithfully as one could, by humble aspirations, quiet ministries, and tender-hearted sympathy; to take as simply as possible whatever message of beauty and hope fell to one's share; not to be absorbed in one's own dreams and imaginings, but to interpret faithfully every syllable of the great Gospel; and, above all, to remember that work was inevitable,

necessary, and even beautiful; but that it only had the noble quality when it was undertaken for the love of others, and not for love of one's self.

XVII

THE return of the sweet spring days, with the balmy breath of warm winds, soft sunshine on the pastures, the songs of contented birds in thicket and holt, brought to Hugh an astonishing richness of sensation, a waft of joy that was not yet light-hearted, joy that was on the one hand touched with a fine rapture, yet on the other hand overshadowed by a wistful melancholy, The frame, braced by wintry cold, revelled in the outburst of warmth, of light, of life; and yet the very luxuriousness of the sensation brought with it a languor and a weariness that was akin rather to death than to life. He rode alone far into the shining countryside, and found, in the middle of wide fields with softly swelling outlines, where the dry ploughlands were dappled with faint fawn-coloured tints, a little wood, in the centre of which was a reed-fringed pool. The new rushes were beginning to fringe the edges of the tiny lake, but the winter sedge stood pale and sere, and filled the air with a dry

rustling. The water was as clear as a translucent gem, and Hugh saw that life was at work on the floor of the pool, sending up rich tresses of green-haired water-weed. The copse was green under foot, full of fresh, uncrumpling leaves. He sat down beside the pool; the silence of the wide fields was broken only by the faint rustling of sedge and tree, and the piping of a bird, hid in some darkling bush hard by. Never had Hugh been more conscious of the general outburst of life all about him, and yet never more aware of his isolation from it all. His body seemed to belong to it all, swayed and governed by the same laws that prompted their gentle motions to tree and herb; but his soul seemed to him to-day like a bright creature caught in the meshes of a net, beating its wings in vain against the constraining threads. From what other free and spacious country was it exiled? What other place did it turn to with desire and love? It seemed to him to-day that he was a captive in a strange land, remembering some distant home, some heavenly Zion, even in his mirth. It seemed to him as if the memory of some gracious place dwelt in his mind, separated only from his earthly memory by a thin yet impenetrable veil. His spirit held out listless hands of entreaty to some unseen power, desir-

ing he knew not what. To-day on earth the desire of all created things seemed to be directed to each other. The tiny creeping sprays of delicate plants that carpeted the wood seemed to interlace with one another in tender embraces. In loneliness they had slept beneath the dark ground, and now that they had risen to the light, they seemed to thrill with joy to find themselves alone no longer. He saw in the leafless branches of a tree near him two doves, with white rings upon their necks, that turned to each other with looks of desire and love. Was it for some kindred spirit, for the sweet consent of some desirous heart that Hugh hankered? No! it was not that! It was rather for some unimagined freedom, some perfect tranquillity that he yearned. It was like the desire of the stranded boat for the motion and dip of the blue sea-billows. He would have hoisted the sail of his thought, have left the world behind, steering out across the hissing, leaping seas, till he should see at last the shadowy summits, the green coves of some remote land, draw near across the azure sea-line. To-day the fretful and poisonous ambitions of the world seemed intolerable to him. As the dweller in wide fields sees the smoke of the distant town rise in a shadowy arc upon the horizon, and thinks with pity of the

toilers there in the hot streets, so Hugh thought of the intricate movement of life as of a thing that was both remote and insupportable. That world where one jostled and strove, where one made so many unwilling mistakes, where one laboured so unprofitably, was it not, after all, an ugly place? What seemed so strange to him was that one should be set so unerringly in the middle of it, while at the same time one was given the sense of its unreality, its distastefulness. So marvellously was one made that one sickened at its contact, and yet, if one separated one's self from it, one drooped and languished in a morbid gloom. The burden of the flesh! The frailty of the spirit! The two seemed irreconcilable, and yet one endured them both. The world so full of beauty and joy, and yet the one gift withheld that would make one content.

And yet it was undeniable that the very sadness that he felt had a sweet fragrance about it. It was not the sadness of despair, but of hope unfulfilled. The soul clasped hands with the unknown, with tears of joy, and leaned out of the world as from a casement, on perilous seas. Indeed the very wealth of loveliness on every hand, and the mysterious yearning to take hold of it, to make it one's own, to draw it into the spirit, the hope that

seemed at once so possible and yet so baffling gave the key of the mystery. There *was* a beauty, there *was* a truth that was waiting for one, and the sweetness here was a type of the unseen. It was only the narrow soul that grudged if it was not satisfied. The brave heart went quietly and simply about its task, welcoming every delicate sight, every whisper of soft airs, every touch of loving hands, every glance of gentle eyes, rejoicing in the mystery of it all; thanking the Lord of life for the speechless wonder of it, and even daring to thank Him that the end was not yet; and that the bird must still speed onwards to the home of its heart, dipping its feet in the crest of the wandering wave, till the land, whither it was bound, should rise like a soft shadow over the horizon; till the shadow became a shape, and at last the tall cliffs, with the green downs above, the glittering plain, the sombre forest, loomed out above one, just beyond where the waves whitened on the loud sea-beaches, and the sound of the breakers came harmoniously over the waste of waters, like the soft tolling of a muffled bell.

XVIII

Up to this time it may be said that Hugh had never felt the pressure of sordid anxieties, or experienced any sorrows but the sorrows of pure emotion. But now all at once there fell on him a series of heavy afflictions. His father died after a very short illness; so little had a fatal result been expected, that Hugh only reached home after his death. It happened that the last sight he had had of his father had been one of peculiar brightness. He had been staying at home, and, on the morning of his return to Cambridge, had gone into the study for a parting talk. He had found his father in a mood not common with him, but which was growing commoner as he grew older, of serene cheerfulness. He had talked to Hugh very eagerly about a little book of poems that Hugh had lately published. Hugh had hardly mentioned it to his father beforehand, but he had dedicated the book to him, though he imagined that his father must consider poetry a dilettante kind of occupation. He was amazed to find,

when he discussed the book with his father, that he was met with so vivid and personal a sympathy, and he discerned that the writing of poetry must have been a preoccupation of his father's in early days, one of those delicate ambitions on which he had sharply turned the key. His mother and sister were away for the day, so that when it was time to go, and the carriage was announced, there was no one but his father in the house. He had, as his custom was, laid his hand on his son's head, and blessed him with a deep emotion, adding a few words of love and confidence that had filled Hugh's eyes with tears; and his father had then put his arm through his son's, walked to the door with him, and had stood there in the bright morning, with his grey hair stirred by the wind, waving his hand till the carriage had turned the corner of the shrubbery.

Hugh often suffered from a certain apprehensiveness of mind on leaving home; he had sometimes wondered, as he said farewell to the group, whether he would see them thus again. But that morning it had never occurred to him that there was any such possibility in store for him; so that now, when he had returned to the darkened house, and presently saw that pale, still form, with a quiet smile on the face, as of one satisfied beyond his dearest wish, he

plunged into a depth of ineffectual sorrow such as he had never known before. The one thought that sustained him was that he and his father had loved, understood, and trusted each other. It was a horror to Hugh to think what his feelings might have been in the old days, if his father had died when his own predominant emotion had been a respectful fear of him.

It seemed impossible to believe that all the activities of that long life were over; and as Hugh went through his father's papers, with incessant little heart-broken griefs at the arrangements and precisions that had stood for so much devoted faithfulness and loyal responsibility, it seemed to him as though the door must open, and the well-known figure, with the smile that Hugh knew so well, stand before him.

The first disaster that was revealed to him was the smallness of his father's fortune; his father, though often talking about business to his son, had a curious reticence about money affairs, and had never prepared him for the scantiness of the provision that he had accumulated. Hugh saw at once that the utmost care would have for the future to be exercised, and that their whole scale of life must be altered. The fact was that his father's professional

income had been ample, and that he had had a strong dislike of saving money from ecclesiastical sources. The home must evidently be broken up at once, and a small house taken for his mother. But fortunately both his mother and sister were entirely undismayed by this; their tastes were simple enough; but Hugh saw that he himself would have to contribute to their assistance. With his own small fortune, his literary work, and a little academical work that he was doing, he had been able to live comfortably enough without taking thought; but now he saw that all this must be curtailed. He had an intense dislike of thinking about money; and he therefore determined that there should be no small economies on his part, but that he would simply, if necessary, alter his easy scale of living.

It was a terrible process disestablishing the old home; the sale of furniture and books, the displacing of the old pictures, seemed to tear and rend all sorts of delicate fibres; but at last the house was dismantled, and it became a bitter sort of joy to leave a place that had become like a sad skeleton of one that he had loved. The trees, the flowers, the church-tower over the elms—as they drove away on that last morning, these seemed to regard him with mournful and hollow eyes; the parting

was indeed so intensely sad, that Hugh experienced a grim relief in completing it and there fell on him a deep dreariness of spirit, which seemed at last to benumb him, until he felt that he could no longer care for anything.

He returned at last to Cambridge; and now illness fell upon him for the second time in his life. Not a definite illness, but a lingering *malaise*, which seemed to bereave him of all spring and energy. He was told that he must not work, must spend his time in the open air, must be careful in matters of food and sleep. He lived indeed for some months the life of an invalid. The restrictions fretted him intolerably; but he found that every carelessness brought its swift revenge. He had previously felt little or no sympathy with invalids; he had disliked the signs of illness in others, the languor, the sunken eye, the fretfulness of fever, and now he had to bear them himself. He had always felt, half unconsciously, that illness was a fanciful thing, and might be avoided by a kind of cheerful effort. But now he had to go through the experience of feebleness and peevish inactivity. He used sometimes, out of pure irritability, to resume his work; but he had no grip or vigour; his conceptions were languid, his technical resources were dulled; and then came strange and unmanning dizziness, the horrible feeling,

in the middle of a cheerful company, that one is hardly accountable for one's actions, when the only escape seems to be to hold on with all one's might to the slenderest thread of conventional thought. The difficulty was to know how to fill the time. There was no relish in company, and yet a hatred of solitude: he used to moon about, sit in the garden, take irresolute walks; he read novels, and found them unutterably dreary. Music was the only thing that lifted him out of his causeless depression, and gave back a little zest to life; but the fear that was almost intolerable was the possibility that he would never emerge out of this wretchedness. Day after day passed, and no change was apparent; till just when he was on the verge of despair, when the darkest visions began to haunt his mind, the cloud began to lift. He found that he could work a little, though the smallest excess was still punished by days of feebleness. But, holding to this thread of hope, Hugh climbed slowly out of the darkness; and it was a day to him of deep and abiding gratitude when, after a long Swiss holiday, in which his bodily activity had come back to him with an intensity of pleasure, Hugh realised that he was again in his ordinary health.

But he had at this time a bitter disappointment. Just before his father's death he had

finished preparing a little work for publication, a set of essays on a variety of subjects, to which he had devoted much care and thought. To his deep vexation it met with a very contemptuous reception. Its errors were mercilessly criticised, and it was proclaimed to be the work of a sickly sentimental dilettante. Hugh found it hard to believe in the verdict; but his conviction was established by the opinion of one of his old friends who, as kindly as possible, pointed out that the book was both thin and egotistical. Hugh felt as if he could never write again, and as if the chief occupation of his life would be gone; but with renewed health his confidence returned, and in a few weeks he was able to look the situation in the face. The reception of the book had brought home to him the direction in which he was drifting. He saw that a certain toughness and hardness of fibre had been wanting. He saw that he had tried to fill a book up out of his own mind, in a leisurely and trifling mood. He had not attempted to grasp his subjects, but had allowed himself to put down loose and half-hearted impressions, instead of trying to see into the essence of the things he was describing.

But, his illness over, he was astonished to find how little both money anxieties and the

shattering of literary hopes distressed him. For the first, it was clear that his mother and sister could live with an adequate degree of comfort and dignity. And as for his literary hopes, he realised that the failure had been a real revelation of his own weakness; but he realised too that other people would forget about the book still faster than he himself, and that no previous failures would damn a further work, if only it possessed the true qualities of art; and indeed from this time he dated a real increase of artistic faculty, a sense of constraining vocation, a joy in literary labour, which soon, like a sunrise, brightened all his horizon; and it was pleasant too, though Hugh did not over-value it, to find his work beginning to bring him a definite though slight reputation, and a position among imaginative critics.

Moreover his new home began to have a very potent charm for him. His mother had settled in a small ancient house in the depths of the country. They had very few neighbours. The little building itself was full of charm, the charm of mellow beauty and old human ownership; it was embosomed among trees, and had a small walled garden, rich in flowers and shade. He had been there but a few weeks, when he realised that the old feeling of a vague friendliness and intimate concern with nature had

come back. It was as though the spirits, which had peopled the remembered flowers and trees of his first home, had flitted with them, and had taken up their abode in this other garden. The flowers seemed to smile at him with the same shy mystery, the trees to surround the house like a troop of loyal sentinels. The absence of the constant social interruptions that had been characteristic of the Rectory was an added charm ; his mother and sister, too, though heavily overshadowed by grief, found the place peaceful and congenial ; and the best joy of all was the sweet and fragrant relation that sprung up among the three. They were like the survivors of a wreck, whose former familiarity had been converted suddenly into a deep and emotional loyalty, by the sad experiences through which they had passed together. The relations had before been affectionate, but in some ways superficial. Hugh to his surprise found himself daily making discoveries about his mother and sister, through the close relationship into which they were brought. Unsuspected tastes and feelings revealed themselves, and he began to be aware of a whole host of new interests that sprang up between them. Sometimes, when a hedgerow is rooted up, one may notice how a whole crop of unknown flowers, whose seeds had been buried deep in

the soil, suddenly emerge to conceal the bare scarred ditch. Hugh thought to himself that the experiences through which they had passed had had this effect of enlarging and extending sympathies which were there all the time, and which had never had an opportunity of revealing themselves. And thus out of sorrow and wretchedness, there sprang to light a whole range of new forces, a vision of new possibilities. It seemed to Hugh that he was like a man who had passed by night through an unfamiliar country, by unknown roads; that as the darkness had begun to glimmer to dawn, the shapeless shadows of things about him had gradually taken shape, and revealed themselves at last to be but the quiet trees with their gentle tapestry of leaves, leaning over his way; and what had been but a formless horror, became revealed as a company of friendly living things that beckoned comfortably to his spirit, and grew into purer colour as the dawn began to break from underground.

XIX

HUGH had always felt that he had very little comprehension of the feminine temperament; he realised to the full how much more generous, unselfish, high-minded, and sympathetic women were than men, their perceptions of personalities more subtle, their intuitions more delicate; in a difficult matter, a crisis involving the relations of people, when it was hard to know how to act, and when, in dealing with the situation, tact and judgment were required, he found it a good rule to consult a woman about what had happened, and a man about what would happen. Women had as a rule a finer instinct about characters and motives, but their advice about how to act was generally too vehement and rash; a woman could often divine the complexities of a situation better, a man could advise one better how to proceed. But what he could seldom follow was the intellectual processes of women; they intermingled too much of emotion with their logic; they made bird-like, darting movements from point to point, instead of following

the track; they tended to be partisans. They forgave nothing in those they disliked; they condoned anything in those they loved. Hugh lived so much himself in the intellectual region, and desired so constantly a certain equable and direct quality in his relations with others, that he seldom felt at ease in his relations with women, except with those who could give him the sort of sisterly *camaraderie* that he desired. Women seemed to him to have, as a rule, a curious desire for influence, for personal power; they translated everything into personal values; they desired to dominate situations, to have their own way in superficial matters, to have secret understandings. They acted, he thought, as a rule, from personal and emotional motives; and thus Hugh, who above all things desired to live by instinct rather than by impulse, found himself fretted and entangled in a fine network of shadowy loyalties, exacting chivalries, subtle diplomacies, delicate jealousies, unaccountable irritabilities, if he endeavoured to form a friendship with a woman. A normal man took a friendship just as it came, exacted neither attendance nor communication, welcomed opportunities of intercourse, but did not scheme for them, was not hurt by apparent neglect, demanded no effusiveness, and disliked sentiment. Hugh, as he grew older, did not desire

very close relationships with people; he valued frankness above intimacy, and candour above sympathy. He found as a rule, that women gave too much sympathy, and the result was that he felt himself encouraged to be egotistical. He used to think that when he spoke frankly to women, they tended to express admiration for the way he had acted or thought; and if he met that by saying that he neither deserved nor wanted praise, he received further admiration for disinterestedness, when all that he desired was to take the matter out of the region of credit altogether. He believed indeed that women valued the pleasure of making an impression, of exercising influence, too highly, and that in this point their perception seemed to fail; they did not understand that a man acts very often from impersonal motives, and is interested in the doing of the thing itself, whatever it may happen to be, rather than in the effect that his action may have upon other people. It was part of the high-mindedness of women that they could not understand that a man should be so absorbed in the practical execution of a matter. They looked upon men's ambitions, their desire to do or make something—a book, a picture, a poem—as a sort of game in which they could not believe that any one could be seriously interest-

ed. Hugh indeed seemed to divine the curious fact that, generally speaking, men and women looked upon the preoccupations and employments of the opposite sex as rather childish; a man would be immersed in practical activities, in business, in organisation, in education, in communicating definite knowledge, in writing books, in attending meetings—this he thought to be the serious and real business of the world; and he was inclined to look upon relationships with other people, sentiment, tender affections, wistful thoughts of others, as a sort of fireside amusement and recreation.

Women, on the other hand, found their real life in these things, desired to please, to win and retain affection, to admire and to be admired, to love and be loved; and they tended to look upon material things—comfort, wealth, business, work, art—as essentially secondary things, which had of course a certain value, but which were not to be weighed in the scale with emotional things. There were naturally many exceptions to this; there were hard, business-like practical women; there were emotional, tender-hearted, sensitive men; but the general principle held good. And thus it was that men and women regarded the supreme emotion of love from such different points of view, and failed so often to comprehend the way in which

the opposite sex regarded it ; to women it was but the natural climax, the raising and heightening of their habitual mood into one great momentous passion ; it was the flower of life slowly matured into bloom ; to men it was more a surprising and tremendous experience, an amazing episode, cutting across life and interrupting its habitual current, contradicting rather than confirming their previous experience.

Hugh was himself rather on the feminine side; though he had a strong practical turn, and could carry through a matter effectively enough, yet he valued delicate and sincere emotions, disinterestedness, simplicity, and loyalty, above practical activity and organisation ; the result of this, he supposed, was that he tended, from a sense of the refreshment of contrast, to make his friends rather among men than among women, and this was, he believed, the reason why he had never fallen frankly in love, because he could to a great extent supply out of his own nature the elements which as a rule men sought among women ; and because the complexity and sensitiveness of his own temperament took refuge rather in tranquillity and straightforward common-sense. As he grew older, as he became absorbed more and more in literary work, he tended, he thought, to draw more and more away from human relationships; the energy,

the interest, that had formerly gone into making new relationships now began to run in a narrower channel. Whether it was prudent to yield to this impulse he did not stop to inquire. It seemed to him that many of his friends wasted a great deal of force and activity from semi-prudential motives. As his life became more solitary, an old friend once took him to task on this point. He said that it was all very well for a time, but that Hugh would find his interest in his work flag, and that there would be nothing to fill the gap. He advised him, at the cost of some inconvenience, to cultivate relations with a wider circle, to go to social gatherings, to make acquaintances. He knew, he said, that Hugh would possibly find it rather tiresome, but it was of the nature of an investment which might some day prove of value.

Hugh replied that he thought that this was living life too much on the principle of the White Knight in *Through the Looking-Glass*. The White Knight kept a mouse-trap slung to his saddle: when it was objected that he would not be likely to find mice on the back of his horse, he replied that perhaps it was not likely, but that if they were there, he did not choose to have them running about. Hugh confessed that he did find ordinary society tiresome; but to persist in frequenting it, on the chance that some

day it would turn out to be a method of filling up vacant hours, seemed to him to be providing against an unlikely contingency, and indeed an ugly and commercial business. He did not think it probable that he would lose interest in his work, and he thought it better to devote himself to it while it interested him. If the time ever came when he needed a new set of relationships, he thought he could trust himself to form them; and if he did not desire to form them, well, to be bored was bad enough, but it was better on the whole to be passively rather than actively bored.

But Hugh's theory in reality went deeper than that. He had a strong belief, which grew in intensity with age, that the only chance of realising one's true life was to do something that interested one with all one's might. He did not believe that what was done purely from a sense of duty, unless it pleased and satisfied some part of one's nature, was ever effective or even useful. It was not well done, and it was neglected on any excuse. His pilgrimage through the world presented itself to Hugh in the light of a journey through hilly country. The ridge that rose in front of one concealed a definite type of scenery; that scenery was there; there were indeed a hundred possibilities about it and the imagination might amuse itself by forecasting

what it was to be like. But it seemed to Hugh that one wasted time in these forecasts: and that it was better to wait and see what it actually was, and then to enjoy it as vigorously as one could. To spend one's time in fantastic speculation as to what was coming, was to waste vigour and thought, which were better employed in observing and interpreting what was around one.

And so Hugh resolved that his relations with others should be of this kind; that he would not seek restlessly for particular kinds of friendships; but that he would accept the circle that he found, the persons with whom relations were inevitable; and that he would make the most of what he found. Choice and selection! How little one really employed them! the world streamed past one, an unsuspected, unlooked-for friend would suddenly emerge from the throng, and one would find one's self journeying shoulder to shoulder for a space. Hugh thought indeed sometimes that one made no friendships at all of one's self; but that God sent the influences of which one had need, at the very time at which one needed them, and then silently and tenderly withdrew them again for a time, when they had done their work for the soul. One received much and perhaps, however unconsciously, however

lightly, one gave something of one's own as well.

But all Hugh's relations with others were overshadowed by the great doubt, which was perhaps the heaviest burden he had to carry, as to whether one's individuality endured. The thought that it might not survive death, made him shrink from establishing a closeness of emotional dependence on another, the loss of which would be intolerable. The natural flame of the heart seemed quenched and baffled by that cold thought. It was the same instinct that made him, as a boy, refuse the gift of a dog, when a pet collie, that had been his own, had been killed by an accident. The pain of the loss had seemed so acute, so irreparable, that he preferred to live uncomforted rather than face such another parting; and there seemed, too, a kind of treachery in replacing love. If, on the other hand, individuality did endure, the best of all relationships seemed to Hugh a frank and sincere companionship, such as may arise between two wayfarers whose road lies together for a little, and who talk easily and familiarly as they walk in the clear light of the dawn. Hugh felt that there was an abundance of fellow-pilgrims, men and women alike, to consort with, to admire, to love; this affability and accessibility made

it always easy for Hugh to enter into close relationship with others. He had little desire to guard his heart; and the sacred intimacy, the sharing of secret thoughts and hopes, which men as a rule give but to a few, Hugh was perhaps too ready to give to all. What he lost in depth and intensity he perhaps gained in breadth. But he also became aware that he had a certain coldness of temperament. Many were dear to him, but none essential. There was no jealousy about his relations with others. He never demanded of a friend that he should give him a special or peculiar regard. His frankness was indeed sometimes misunderstood, and people occasionally supposed that they had evoked a nearness of feeling, an impassioned quality, which was not really there. "You give away your heart in handfuls," said a friend to him once in a paroxysm of anger, fancying himself neglected; and Hugh felt that it was both just and unjust. He had never, he thought, given his heart away at all, except as a boy to his chosen friend. But he gave a smiling and tender affection very easily to all who seemed to desire it. He knew indeed from that first experience something of the sweet mystery of faithful devotion; but now he could only idealise, he could not idolise. The world was full of friendly, gracious, inter-

esting people. Circumstance spun one to and fro among the groups and companies; how could one give a unique regard, when there were so many that claimed allegiance and admiration? He saw others flit from passion to passion, from friendship to friendship—Hugh's aim was rather to be the same, to be loyal and true, to be able to take up a suspended friendship where he had laid it down; the most shameful thing in the world seemed to him the ebbing away of vitality out of a relationship; and therefore he would not give pledges which he might be unable to redeem. If the conscious soul survived mortal death, then perhaps these limitations of time and space, which suspended friendships, would exist no longer, and he could wait for that with a quiet hopefulness. But if it all passed away, and was as though it had never been, if life was but a leaping flame, a ripple on the stream, then how could one have the heart to tie indissoluble links?

Hugh half understood that the weakness of his case was that he could argue about it at all. Others went blindly and ardently into loves and friendships, because an irresistible impulse carried them away—with Hugh the impulse was not irresistible. Meanwhile he would give what he could, offer rather than claim;

he would reject no proffer of friendship, but he would not, or perhaps he could not, fetter himself with heavy chains of emotion. But even so he was aware that this temperance, this balance of nature, was not a wholly beautiful or desirable thing.

The perception of this came home to Hugh with peculiar force on a bright fresh day of early spring, when he walked with a friend in the broad green fields beside the Cam. They had been strolling first in the college gardens, where the snowdrops were pushing up, some of them bearing on their heads the crust of earth that had sheltered them; crocuses rose in the borders, like little bursts of flame. A thrush was singing on a high bough, and seemed to be telling, in an eager mystery, the very hopes and dreams of Hugh's heart. He said something that implied as much to his friend, who replied that he did not understand that.

This friend of Hugh's was much younger than himself, of a fastidious and somewhat secluded nature, but possessing for Hugh the deep attraction of a peculiar type of character. He had great critical and literary gifts, and seemed to Hugh to bring to the judgment of artistic work an extraordinarily clear and fine criterion of values. But beside this, he seemed to Hugh to have the power of entering into a very close

and emotional relationship with people; and out in the meadows where the sun shone bright, the breeze blew soft, and the first daisies showed their heads among the grass, Hugh asked him to explain what he felt about his relationship with others. His friend said that it came to this, that it was the only real and vital thing in the world; and when Hugh pressed him further, and asked him what he felt about the artistic life, his friend said that it was a great mystery, because art also seemed to him a strong, entrancing, fascinating thing; but that it ran counter to and cut across his relations with others, and seemed almost like a violent and distracting temptation, that tore him away from all vital impulse. He added that the problem as to whether individuality endured (of which they had spoken earlier, seemed to him not to affect the question at all, any more than it affected one's sleep or appetite. At this, for a moment, a mist seemed to roll away from Hugh's eyes, though he knew that it would close in again, and for an instant he understood; to himself relations with others were but one class of beautiful experiences, like art, and music, and nature, and hints of the unseen; not differing in quality, but only in kind, from other experiences. Hugh saw, too, in the same flash of insight, that what kept him from emotional relation-

ships was a certain timidity—a dislike of anything painful or disturbing; and that the mistake he made, if that can be called a mistake which was so purely instinctive, was his desire to obliterate and annihilate all the unpleasing, painful, and disagreeable elements from all circumstances and situations. The reason why Hugh did not hunger and thirst after friendship was, he saw, that inconveniences, humours, misunderstandings, mannerisms, *entourage*, were all so many disagreeable incidents which interfered with his tranquillity of enjoyment. If he had really loved, these things would have weighed as nothing in comparison with the need of satisfying the desire of relationship; as it was, they weighed so much with Hugh that they overpowered the other instinct. It was really a sort of luxuriousness of temperament that intervened; and Hugh felt that for a man to say that he loved his friends, and yet to allow this fastidious sense of discomfort to prevent his seeing them, was as if a man said that he was devoted to music, and yet allowed the tumult of concert-rooms to prevent his ever going to hear music. And yet the language of friendship was so familiar, and the power of multiplying relations with others was so facile a thing with Hugh, that he saw that his failure in the matter was a deplorable and a

miserable thing. He was singularly and even richly equipped for the pursuit of friendship; while his very sensitiveness, his inherent epicureanism, which made advance so easy, made progress impossible.

And yet he realised that it was useless to deplore this; that no amount of desire for the larger and deeper experience would make him capable of sustaining its pains and penalties. He saw that he was condemned to pass through life, a smiling and courteous spectator of beauty and delight; but that, through a real and vital deficiency of soul, he could have no share in the inner and holier mysteries.

XX

HITHERTO it had seemed to Hugh that life was a struggle to escape from himself, from that haunting personality which, like a shadow, dogged and imitated his movements, but all with a sombre blackness, a species of business-like sadness of gesture, doing heavily and mechanically what he himself did with such blitheness and joy. Again and again that self seemed to thwart, to hinder, to check him. There were days, it seemed to him, when a conflict was waged, an unequal conflict, between that outer and that inner self. Days when the inner spirit was intense, alert, eager, and when the outer self was languid, dreary, mockingly sedate and indolent. Again there were days, and these were the saddest of all, when the inner spirit seemed to Hugh to be tranquil, high-minded, and strong; when that outer self was malign, turbulent, and headstrong, and when all the resolution and vigour he possessed appeared to be wasted, not in following the higher aims and imaginings with a patient pur-

pose, but in curbing and reining the rough and coltish nature that seemed so sadly yoked with his own. He felt on those days like a wearied and fretful charioteer, driving through a scene of rich and moving beauty, on which he would fain feast his eyes and heart, but compelled to an incessant watchfulness, a despairing strain, in watching and guiding his refractory, his spiteful steeds. The control he had never forfeited wholly. Perhaps his sensitiveness, his solitariness, his fastidiousness, had tended to keep his sensuous nature within bounds.

But he went through strange moods, when he could almost wish that he had not been so cautious, so prudent; he felt that he had travelled through life as a spectator merely; and the element of passionate feeling, of confessed devotion, of uncalculating love, had passed him by. He used, in these moods, to wish that he had some soul-stirring experience to look back upon, some passionate affection, some overpowering emotion, which might have constrained him to open and unashamed utterance. How had he missed, he used to ask himself, the experience of a deep and whole-hearted love? There was nothing easier in the world than to establish a certain intimacy of relation. He had, he was aware, a friendly air and a certain simple charm of manner, which made it an

easy thing for him to say what was in his mind. A single interview was often enough for him to make a friendship. He had an acute superficial sensibility, which made it very easy for him to divine another's tastes and emotions; and his own emotional experiences, his freedom of expression, gave him the power of interpreting and entering into the feelings of others. But his experience was always the same. He could clasp hands with another soul, he could step pleasantly and congenially through the anterooms and corridors of friendship; but as soon as the great door that led to the inner rooms of the house came in sight, a certain coldness, a shamefacedness held him back; the hand was dropped, the expected word unspoken.

Thus Hugh found himself with a great number of close friends, and without a single intimate one. He had never bared his heart to another, he had never seen another heart bare before his eyes. He had never let himself go. Thus he was a master, so to speak, of the emotional elements up to a certain point; but he had never made a surrender of himself, and had always with a certain coldness checked any signs of a surrender in others. A close friendship had once been abruptly ended by the bestowal of certain deep confidences by his friend, sad and touching confidences. This

incident, had drawn a veil between him and his friend, a veil that he could not withdraw. His evident coldness, on the day following, to the friend who had trusted him, disconcerted and repelled the other. Hugh could remember a mute and appealing look that he gave him; but though he felt that he was acting ungenerously and even basely, he could only meet it with a blank and repellent gaze, and the friendship had been broken off, never to be renewed. He had made, too, friends with women both of his own age and older; but the moment that the friendship seemed cemented, the emotion on Hugh's part cooled into a *camaraderie* which was both misunderstood and blamed. Why go so far if you did not mean to go further? appeared to be the unuttered question which met him; to which his own temperament seemed always to to reply, Why shake our easy and comfortable friendship by distracting and bewildering emotions? It was, Hugh grew to discern, a real blot in his character; it was a prudence, a caution in emotional things, a terror, no doubt in a sensitive spirit of giving pledges, of making vows, of surrendering the will and the spirit. It did not indeed bring him unhappiness—that was the saddest part of it; but it left him involved in a kind of selfish isolation. His soul, he felt, was like a smiling island, which with its green

glades and soft turf invites the wayfarer to set foot therein, with a smiling welcome from the spirit of the place. But the wood once penetrated, then at the back of the paradise ran a cliff-front of sad-coloured crags, preventing further ingress. If indeed the shrine of the island had stood guarded within a temple which, in its deep columned and shadowed recesses, had shielded a holy presence, it would have been different; but the land beyond was bare and desolate. That was, Hugh thought, the solution. The bright foreshore, the waving trees the shelter and fountains, seemed to promise a place of delicate delights; and there were some of those who landed there, who, on seeing the pale cliff behind, believed, with a deep curiosity, that some very sacred and beautiful thing must there be enshrined. But it was the emptiness of the further land, Hugh thought, that made it imperative to guard the mystery. In that bare land indeed he himself seemed to pace, bitterly pondering; he would even kneel on the bare rocks, and hold out his hands in intense entreaty to the God who had made him and who withdrew Himself so relentlessly within the blank sky, that a blessing might fall upon the stony wilderness. But this blessing was withheld; whether by his own fault, or through the just will of the Father, Hugh could not

wholly discern. The hard fact remained that the inner fortress was blank and bare, and that no friend or lover could be invited thither.

But as Hugh's manhood melted into his middle age, the conflict between the outer and inner spirit decreased. He was still, as ever, conscious of the coldness of his inner heart; but he grew to believe that a compromise was possible, and that his work was to cheer and welcome, with all the outer resources at his command, any pilgrims who sought his aid. He became patiently and unwearyingly kind. There was no trouble he would not take for any one who appealed to him. He gave a simple affection, a quiet sympathy, with eager readiness; and learned that, if he lacked that fiery and impetuous core of emotion, which can make the whole world different to those who can light their torches at its glow, yet he could smooth the path and comfort the steps of less ardent, less impulsive spirits. He could add something of light and warmth to the cold world. If sometimes those who were attracted by his genial bearing and sympathetic kindness were disappointed and troubled at finding how slender a stream it was, well, that was inevitable. He realised himself that his was a shallow nature, full of motion and foam, wide but not deep, and that its bright force and swift curves hid from

others, though not from himself, its lack of force and energy. And so when it came to him to lay aside his public work, and to enter a life which seemed an almost disappointingly meagre field to those who had formed high hopes of him, believing that he had a rich and prodigal nature, a depth of insight and force, he made the change himself with a fervent and abundant gratitude; feeling that he was unequal to the larger claims, and would but have attempted to hide his lack of force under a certain brisk liveliness and paradoxical display; while that in the narrow channel which his life now entered, he would at least be employing all the force of which he was capable.

He was not free from misgivings; but he felt that what appeared to be a shrinking and cowardly diffidence to others, was the inevitable result of the richness of his outer nature, the exuberance of which they held to issue from a reservoir of secret force; but, though he sighed at their disappointment, he felt that he was estimating himself more truly; and that he lacked that inner fulness of spirit, that patient unselfishness, which could alone have sustained him. He remained indeed a child, with the charm, the gaiety, the simplicity of a child, but with the wilfulness, the faint-heartedness, the desultoriness of a child. And he felt that in making his

choice he was indeed following the will of his Father, making the most of his single talent, instead of juggling with it to make it appear to be two or even ten.

He had his reward in an immediate and simple tranquillity of spirit. He never doubted nor looked back. Those who saw him, and thought regretfully what he might have been, what he might have done, would sometimes give utterance to their disappointment, and even peevishly blame him. But here again his coldness of temperament assisted him. He submitted to such criticisms and censures with a regretful air, as though he were half convinced of their truth. But the severer and sterner spirit within was never touched or affected. Ambitious and fond of display as he had been, the loss of dignity and influence weighed nothing with him ; he was even surprised to find how little it touched him with any sense of regret or yearning. His fear had been once that perhaps he was great, and that indolence and luxuriousness alone held him back from exercising that greatness. But God had been good to him in neither humiliating nor exposing him, and now that he himself had lifted the lid of the ark in the innermost shrine, and had seen how bare and unfurnished it was, he saw in a flash of humble insight how wisely he was held back.

Truth, however painful, has always something bracing and sustaining about it; and the days in which Hugh learned the truth about himself had nothing of gloom or sadness about them. The discovery indeed surprised him with a certain lightness and freshness of spirit. He smiled to think that he had entered the vale of humiliation, and had found it full of greenness and musical with fountains. A great flood of peace flowed in upon him; and all the delicate love of nature, of trees and skies, of flowers and moving water, came back to him with an increased and deep significance. Before he had seen their outward appearance; now he looked into their spirit; and so he passed along the dreary valley light of foot and singing to himself. Mr. Fearing, in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, went down from the House Beautiful into the valley, said Mr. Greatheart, "as well as ever I saw man in my life. I never saw him better in all his pilgrimage than when he was in that valley. Here he would lie down, embrace the ground, and kiss the very flowers that grew in the valley. He would now be up every morning by break of day tracing and walking to and fro in this valley."

Even so was it with Hugh. The place that he had feared was revealed to him in a moment as his native air. Men do not lose all of a sudden their temptations, and least of all those

who have desired the prize rather than the labour. But Hugh saw that the place where he set his feet was holy. And as for his poor desires, he put them in the hands of his Father, and rejoiced to find that they were faithfully and serenely purged away.

He began to learn, but with what infinite difficulty, what entanglement of delay, that the great mistake that he had made in his religious life, was the limiting the direct influence of God to the pietistic, the devotional region. All the tender and remote associations of childhood had to be broken off and drawn away one by one, as one snaps and pulls ivy down from a wall, before he could reach the thought he was approaching; and how often, too, did the old conception surprise him, interrupt him, entangle him again unawares! It seemed to Hugh, reflecting on the problem, how strange a thing was the pageant life all about him, the march of invisible winds, the sweeping up of cloudy vapours, the slow ruin of rocky places, the spilling of sweet streams; and then, in a nearer region, the quaint arbitrary forms of living creatures, their innate instincts, their intelligence, so profoundly and delicately organised in one direction, so weak in another; and then again the horrible threads of cruelty, of suffering, of death, inwoven so relentlessly in the fabric

of the world, the pitiless preying of beast upon beast; and, further still, the subtle and pathetic wisdom of the human spirit, sadly marking what is amiss, and setting itself so feebly, so pitifully, to amend it; the shaping of communities, the social moralities, so distinct from, so adverse to the morality of nature—reflecting, as I say, on these things, Hugh became aware, with a growing astonishment, that though mankind attributed, in an easy and perfunctory way, all these phenomena to the creative hand of God, yet instead of trying to form a conception of Him and His dark thoughts from this legible and gigantic handwriting, which revealed so impenetrable, so imperturbable a will, they sought to trace His influence only in some bewildered region of the human spirit, the struggles of inherited conscience, the patient charity of men, that would seek to knot up the loose ends which, in their pathetic belief in self-developed principles, they could not help imagining that the Maker of all had left unravelled and untied.

To believe in God and yet to seek to improve upon His ways! what a strange and incredible contradiction! And yet what made the position a more bewildering one still was the certainty that these very inner impulses to amend, to improve, came from God as clearly as the very evils that He permitted and indeed

originated. What was the exit from this intolerable tangle of thought? Law indeed seemed absolute, law on a scale at once so colossal and so minute, law that sent the planets whirling through space round the central sun—and yet dwelt, cell within cell, in the heart of the smallest pebble that rolled upon the sea-beach. And side by side with this law ran a thwarting force, an impulse to make man do blindly the very things that led inevitably to destruction, to endow him with an intense desire of life, and yet to leave him ignorant of the laws that hurried him, reluctant and amazed, to death. Hugh grew to feel that some compromise was necessary; that to live in the natural impulses alone, or in the developed impulses alone, was an impossibility. A hundred voices called him, a hundred hands beckoned or waved him back; nature prompted one thing, reason another, association another, piety another; and yet each was in a sense the calling of God. The saddest thing was that to obey any of the voices brought no peace or tranquillity; he obeyed piety, and nature continued fiercely to prompt the opposite; he obeyed association, and reason mocked his choice. He became aware that in order to triumph over these manifold and uneasy contradictions, a certain tranquillity of mind must be acquired; he found that to a large extent he

must trust intuition, which could at all events settle, if it could not reconcile, conflicting claims; even when reason indicated a choice of paths, the voice of the soul cried out clearly the way that he must choose; the obedience to intuition was generally approved by experience, until Hugh began to see, at last, that it was the guide of all, and that thus we came nearest to the heart of God. He found, indeed, very often, that even when prudence and reason afforded excellent reasons for abstaining from action, to yield to intuition turned out to be the wisest and the kindest course; until, in practical matters, he learned to trust it unhesitatingly, even if it led him, as the light led the pilgrim, to stumble for a time in a field full of dark mountains.

XXI

THERE was, as I have said, a strong visionary tendency in Hugh, which had been to a certain extent restricted in the days of his professional life; but now that he was free, it began to recur with extraordinary frequency and force. It was when he was reading that this faculty visited him, as a rule, and more especially when he read, as he was accustomed to do, after he was awake in the morning, until the time came for him to rise. The mind, struggling to free itself from the dominion of sleep, had not yet put on the obedience of the day, but seemed to act with whimsical independence of its own. His thoughts were then most apt to wear a melancholy tinge; a certain apprehensive shadow often lay upon him, a sense of being unequal to the claims of the day, a tendency to rehearse, without hopefulness or spring, the part he would have to play, to exaggerate difficulties and obstacles. Reading, as a rule, served to distract his thoughts; but it was hardly an intellectual so much as a meditative

process; the thoughts and words of the writer, on such occasions, often seemed to him like beaters going through a covert, tramping the fern and rapping the tree trunks, starting from their lairs all kinds of hidden game.

One morning he was lying thus, reading quietly, when there suddenly darted into his mind, for no particular reason, the thought of a summer day he had spent as a small boy at his public school. It had been a holiday; the day cloudless and bright, yet with a delicious coolness in the air; and the sunshine fell, he remembered, on the great trees of the place and the venerable buildings, gleaming through a golden haze, which made it seem as though he viewed everything, not through empty air, but through a tinted and tangible medium, as it were an aërial honey, which lent a liquid sweetness to all outlines and surfaces. He had wandered off with a friend, in that perfect afternoon, through the meadows, for a long vague ramble, ending up with a bathe in the river. The day was beautifully still, and he could almost smell the hot honeyed fragrance of the flowers, and hear the angry murmur of the busy flies, that sat basking on the leaves of the hedgerow. He seemed to himself to have been full of a vague and restless emotion, a sense of happiness that just missed its end, that would have

been complete if there had not been something wanting, some satisfaction of an instinct that he could not put into words. His companion had been a boy of his own age, who, it had seemed to Hugh, was in the same wistful mood. But there had been no attempt to express in words any of these thoughts. They had walked for the most part in silence, interrupted by the vague, inconsequent, and rather gruff remarks, that are the symbols of equal friendship. They had rambled a long way beside the stream, with the thick water-plants growing deep at the edge. The river came brimming down, clear and cool, the tiny weeds swaying among the dark pools, the rushes bowing and bending, as though plucked by unseen hands. The stream was full of boys in boats, and the eager noise and stir were not congenial to Hugh's meditative mood. The bathing-place was by a weir where the green water plunged through the sluices, filling the stream with foam and sound; all about floated the exquisite reedy smell of warm river water, bringing with it a sense of cool and unvisited places, hidden backwaters among green fields, where the willows leaned together, and the fish hung mute in the pools. They had bathed under a tall grove of poplars, and Hugh could remember the delicious freshness of the turf under his naked feet, and the

sun-warmed heat of the wooden beams of the wharf. The plunge in the cold bubbling water had swept all his thoughts away into the mere joy of life, but as he sat, after dressing, with the music of the water in his ears, the same wistful mood had settled down on his mind.

What did it all mean? Whither was all this beauty, this delight tending? He thought of all the generations of boys who had bathed in this place, full of joy and life. Where were they all now? He thought of those who should come after, when he too was gone to take his place in the world. And then they had gone slowly back through the meadows, with a delicious languor of sensation; the sun was now beginning to decline, and the blue wooded hills across the stream, with the smoke going up beneath them from unseen houses, wore the same air of holding some simple and sweet secret which they would not tell, and which Hugh could not penetrate. It was sad, too, to think that the beautiful day was done, become a memory only; and that he must plunge again for the morrow and for many morrows into the tide of affairs and boisterous life. He made one effort to put his thoughts into words. Putting his arm for a moment in the arm of his companion, he said, "Let us remember to-day!" His friend, who was

walking sedately along with a stalk of grass between his lips, looked at him in a peculiar manner, smiled and nodded; this little compact, so quietly made, seemed for an instant to have brought Hugh and his friend together into a charmed circle. Had his friend forgotten what he remembered? The last time he had seen him, he had found a prosperous business man, full of affairs; and he had not reminded him of the day when they went together by the stream.

The whole picture came before Hugh as an almost impossible sweet and rapturous memory, clutching with a poignant passion at his heart. What was the secret of the fragrant days that had departed and could never return? Was it well to recall them? And what too was the secret of that strange and beautiful alchemy of the mind, that forgot all the troubles and cares of the old life, and even touched the few harsh incidents that it did retain with a wistful beauty, as though they had had some desirable element in them? Would it not be better, more tranquillising for the spirit, if the memory retained only the dark shadows of the past? so that the mind could turn with zest and interest to the joys of the moment? Instead of that, memory tempted the soul, by a kind of magical seduction, to dwell only upon

what was sweet and beautiful in the past, thereby emphasising and heightening the sense of dissatisfaction with the present. Was it true that the very days that were then passing, those sober, uneventful days, would at some future time be touched by the same reluctant, pathetic quality of recollection? It was certainly so; the mind, dwelling on the past, had that extraordinary power of rejecting all the dreary débris of life, and leaving only the pure gold, a hundred times refined; and yet it brought with it that mournful shadow of sadness, of the irrevocable, the irreplaceable past. But it seemed, too, to hold a hope within it, a hope that, if the pilgrimage of the soul were not to be ended by death, then memory, unshadowed by present sadness, in the deep content of a freedom from all material anxieties, might become one of the purest and deepest treasures that it was possible to conceive. Hugh thought that his disembodied spirit might, in the after time, perhaps haunt those very river-banks, and with the mystery solved that had oppressed and darkened his human pilgrimage, might surrender itself to that beautiful and absolute tranquillity, that peace which the world could not give, for which he daily and hourly yearned. Perhaps indeed it was the presence of some such invisible, haunting

revenant whispering at his ear, longing even for some contact with healthy humanity, that had given him the wistful sense of mystery and longing. Who could say?

And then the mood of recollection lapsed and rolled away like mists from a morning hill, and left Hugh once more confronted with the ugliness and dreariness of the actual world; only from his vision remained the hope, the resolution, to extract from life, as it passed, the purest and most delicate elements; its sweetness, its serenity; so that he might leave, as far as was possible, an inheritance of undimmed beauty for the memory to traffic with, to rid it so far as he could from all the envy, the dull detail, the tiresome complexities that might poison retrospect, leaving nothing but the fine gold of thought.

XXII

HUGH was wandering as his custom was, one hot and thunderous day, in the country lanes; it was very still, and through the soft haze that filled the air, the distant trees and fields lost their remoteness, and stood stiffly and quaintly as though painted. There seemed a presage of storm in the church-tower, which showed a ghostly white among the elms. A fitful breeze stirred at intervals. Hugh drew near the hamlet, and all of a sudden stepped into a stream of inconceivable swiftness and fragrance; he saw in a moment what was its origin. The strawberry-pickers were out in a broad field, and from the crushed berries, however lightly bruised, there poured this flow of scent, at once rich and pure, with all the native soul of the fruit exhaling upon the air. It was to other familiar scents like ointment poured forth; it seemed indeed to Hugh that anything so intensely impressive to the sense ought to have power to tinge the colourless air, which was thus so exquisitely laden and impregnated.

He was now close to the church. It was a little, low, ancient structure, with a small, quaint, open belfry, beautifully proportioned, and all built out of a soft and mellow grey stone. The grass grew long in the churchyard, which was not so much neglected as wisely left alone, and an abundance of pink mallow, growing very thickly, gave a touch of bright colour to the grass. He stopped for a while considering the grave of a child, who died at the age of five years, with an artless epitaph painted on a wooden cross. The grave was piously tended, though it bore a date of some ten years back; there were little rose-trees growing there, and a border of pansies, all the work, Hugh fancied of children, doing gentle honour to a dead sister; whom they thought of, no doubt, as lying below in all her undimmed childish beauty; the pale face, the waxen limbs, the flowing hair, as they had looked their last upon her, waiting in a quiet sleep for the dawn of that other morning. How much better to think of her so, than of the dreadful reality which Hugh, in a sudden, almost terrified, flash of fancy, knew to be lying, an almost insupportable blot upon all that was fair and seemly, in the stained and mouldered coffin. Yet there was a place for that difficult horror

too in the scheme of things, though the thought seemed almost to taint the sweet air of the place.

This was only one of the parts of the great mystery over which he brooded so often; the noisome things of the world, its weakness its decay; the shivering repugnance of the spirit, the almost impossibility of joy or courage in the presence of such thoughts; that was the strangest part of it, the rebellion of the inmost central spirit against what was so natural, so common. Death was harsh enough, but that it should be attended with such an extremity of disgrace and degradation—that seemed an intolerable thing.

Yet to the charnel-worm, rioting in all the horror of decay, there could be nothing but a blind joy in the conditions which Hugh hardly even dared to imagine. To indulge such thoughts was morbid, perhaps. But here they presented themselves at every turn, and Hugh felt that to turn his back upon them was but to shirk the part of the problem that he disliked. Not so could he attain to any knowledge of the secret of things. The horror must not of course be unduly emphasised; the morbidity lay there, in the danger of seeing things out of due proportion; but the proportion was just as much sacrificed, indeed more sacrificed, by ignoring

the facts. Neither was he at all afraid of any undue preponderance of the morbid element in his contemplations. He took far too deep a delight in the beautiful and gracious sights and sounds of earth for that; and the conclusion that he drew, as he turned away, was that a suspension of judgment in the face of an insoluble mystery was the only course; to leave the windows of the soul open to every impression, to every fact, whether it was the voice and glance of humanity, the sweetness of art and sound, the appeal of ancient buildings, the waving of tall trees, the faces of bright flowers, the songs of lively birds in the thicket—ay, and the intimations of death and decay as well, all that was ugly and wretched in humanity, the coarse song from the alehouse, the slatternly woman about her weary work, the crying of a child that had been punished, the foul oozings of the stockyard. These were all as real, as true impressions as the others. To strike some balance, neither to forget the ideal in the real, or to lose sight of the real in the ideal, that was his task. And the consolation, though a stern one, lay in the fact that, dark and bitter as the mystery was at one point, gracious and glowing as it was at another, yet it was certainly *there*. Concrete and abstract, the impressions of sense, the in-

tuitions of the spirit, each and all had their part. In this life, this swift interchange of darkness and light, of sunshine and gloom, he might never approach the secret—nay, he did not even hope that he would. But at least he could draw a few steps nearer, and with a humble heart he would wait for the glory that should be revealed, or for the silence and darkness that, it might be, would close upon him. For whatever should be the end, Hugh had no doubt that there was certainly behind life a mind and a will, to which it was not only no mystery, but a truth simple, obvious, and plain; for him, his duty was to use both observation and imagination; not to let the imagination outrun the observation, but to mark all that he could, and infer what he could; while at the same time he felt equally sure that he was not to be a mere observer; blindly registering impressions, content to analyse difficulties. Better than that was to repose an ardent faith in his intuitions; but each alike, without the aid of the other, was perilous and insecure.

While he thus reflected, there seemed to flow into his mind a deep melancholy, which, like a dark liquid dropped into clear water, began to tinge and cloud the translucent tide. To live by a due proportion of emotion and reason, that was the problem; but how were they to

be mingled? One seemed so isolated in the matter, so left without any certainty of guidance. If one allowed emotion too great a latitude, one became sentimental, unbalanced, personal; if one was swayed by reason, one became dry, impersonal, cold. Was one indeed meant to stumble along the track, making irreparable mistakes, seeing only in retrospect, with a shocking clearness of vision, what one ought to have done? Was one to regret alike impulse and prudence? And the old faults of temperament, how they appeared and reappeared! However clearly one saw one's mistakes, however much one admired nobleness, and generosity, and courage, could one change the innermost character at all? The ghastly fact was that one seemed framed to desire the unattainable. What broken, faded, feeble things the majority of men's lives were! The pageant of human life seemed nothing more than failure on a gigantic scale.

Suddenly the lightning writhed and fell, the thunder broke out over Hugh's head, as he walked in the quiet lane, a rattling, furious peal, like leaden weights poured in a cascade upon a vast boarded floor—an inconceivable sound, from its sharpness, its tangibility, its solidity, to proceed from those soft regions of the air, in which a velvety greyness dwelt suffused, with a lurid

redness in the west. The rain fell a moment afterwards in a soft sheet, leaping in the road, and making a mist above the ground.

It was soon over, while Hugh sheltered in a big barn, with a pleasant dark dusty roof, and high piles of fragrant straw all about him.

What a change when he stepped out! the thunder had leaped into the west, the air was clean and sweet, and a ravishing scent came from the satisfied fields.

With the drench of rain, something poisonous seemed to have been washed out of Hugh's mind. All that afternoon, in the sullen heat, he had brooded stupidly and miserably enough, picking up, as it were, dart after dart from his little bundle of cares and miseries, and pricking his heart with them.

Where was it all gone? In the clear fresh air he felt like a man awaked from a nightmare, and restored to cheerful life again. What did past failures, future anxieties, matter to him? He had his work, his place, his liberty, and what further could he need?

His liberty! How good that was! He might go and come as he would, unquestioned, unblamed. He thought with a pitying horror of what his life had previously been—the tangle of small engagements, the silly routine work, in which no one believed; they had all been

bound on a kind of make-believe pilgrimage, carrying burdens round and round, and putting them down where they had taken them up.

He determined that, whatever happened, he would do no more work in which he did not believe, that he would say what he felt, not what traditional formulas required him to say. Work! he believed in that with all his heart, so long as it had an end, an object. To wrestle with the comprehension of some difficult matter, there were few pleasures like that! but it must have been an advance, when it was over; one must feel that one is stronger, more clear-minded, more alert, more sincere; one must not feel that one was only more weary, more dissatisfied. His path was clear before him at all events.

Plans and schemes began to rise in Hugh's brain; he felt as if he was delivered from the brooding sway of some evil and melancholy spirit. How strange was the power that physical conditions had upon the very stuff of the mind! Half an hour ago the grievances, the self-pity, the dissatisfaction had appeared to him to be real and tangible troubles; not indeed things which it was wise to brood over, but inevitable pains, to be borne with such philosophy as was attainable. But now they seemed as unreal, as untrue, as painful dreams,

from which one wakes with a sharp and great relief.

What remained with Hugh was the sense of one of the dangers of solitary life—the over-influence, the preponderance of sentiment. The only serenity was to be found in claiming and expecting nothing, but in welcoming what came as a gift, as an added joy, to which one had indeed no right; but which fell like the sunshine and the rain; one must be ready to help, to work, to use one's strength at whatever point it could be best applied, and to look for no reward. This was what poisoned life, the claim to be paid in the coin that pleased one best. Payment indeed was made largely; and the blessed thing was that if one was not paid fully for one's efforts, neither was one paid relentlessly for one's mistakes.

And then, as to the deeper shadows of the world, the sorrows, the bereavements, the sufferings, the dark possibilities, that lay like the shadows of trees across a sunlit road—death itself, that grim horizon that closed the view whichever way one looked—the mistake lay in attempting to reckon with them beforehand, to anticipate them, to discount them. They were all part of the plan, and one could not alter them. Better to let them come, to husband strength and joy to meet them, rather than to

dissipate one's courage by dwelling upon them. Indeed all Hugh's experience showed him that troubles, even the deepest, wore a very different aspect when one was inside them.

The very storm itself was a parable. Those zigzag ribbons of purple fire, the fierce shouting of the thunderclap that followed! In all the wide forest-tracts over which the tempest hung, all that grim artillery did but rend and split some one tough tree. Rather it turned again to gladden the earth, and the tears of heaven, that fell so steeply, only laid the dust of the hot road, and filled the pasture of the lane with the fragrance of the cleansed earth and the comforted brake.

XXIII

As Hugh became more and more enamoured of his work, and of the sweet peace of the country side, he became more and more averse to visiting London. But he was forced to do this at intervals. One hot summer day he went thus reluctantly to town; the rattle of the train, the heated crowd of passengers, the warm mephitic air that blew into the carriage from the stifling, smoke-grimed tunnel—all these seemed to him insupporably disgusting. But the sight, the sound, the very smell of London itself, was like a dreadful obsession; he wondered how he could ever have endured to live there. The streets lay in the steady sun, filled with fatigued, hurrying persons. The air was full of a sombre and oppressive murmur; the smell of the roadways, the hot vapour of cook-shops, the din and whizz of vehicles, the ceaseless motion of faces: all this filled him with a deep pity for those who had to live their lives under such conditions. Was it to this that our boasted civilisation had

brought us? and yet it seemed that the normal taste of ordinary people turned by preference to this humming and buzzing life, rather than to the quiet and lonely life in the green spaces of the country; Hugh had little doubt that the vast majority of those he saw, even the pale, patient work-people who were peeping, as they toiled, grimy and sweat-stained, from the open windows, would choose this life rather than the other, and would have condemned the life of the country as dull. Was it he, Hugh wondered, or they that were out of joint? Ought he to accept the ordinary, sensible point of view, and try to conform himself to it, crush down his love for trees and open fields and smiling waters? The sociable, herding instinct was as true, as God-sent an instinct as his own pleasure in free solitude; and the old adage that God made the country but man made the town was as patently absurd as to say that God made the iceberg, but the ant made the ant-heap.

He went to his club, a place which he rarely entered; it was full of brisk and cheerful men, lunching with relish; some of them had hurried in from their work, and were enjoying the hour of leisure; some were the old frequenters of the place, men whose work in the world was over, as well as men who had never known

what it was to work. But these men, even some who seemed crippled with age and infirmity, seemed as intent upon their pleasures, as avid of news, as eager for conversation, as particular about their food, as if their existence was of a supreme and weighty importance. Hugh watched an elderly man, whom he knew by name, who was said to be the most unoccupied man in London, who was administering food and drink to himself with a serious air of delicate zest, as though he were presiding benevolently at some work of charity and mercy. He had certainly flourished on his idleness like a green bay tree! Hugh was inclined to believe in the necessity to happiness of the observance of some primal laws, like the law of labour, but here was a contradiction to all his theories. He sighed to think of the mountains of carefully prepared food that this rosy, well-brushed person must have consumed in the course of his life! He was a notoriously selfish man, who never laid out a penny except on his own needs and pleasures. Yet here was he, guarded like the apple of God's eye, and all the good things that the earth held—ease, comfort, independence, health honour, and the power of enjoyment—were heaped upon him with a liberal hand. No wonder he thought so well of the world! Hugh

had heard him say, with an air of virtuous complacency, that he was generally pretty comfortable.

Hugh did not grudge his luxurious ease with the great statesman who sat in the corner, with an evening paper propped up on a silver dish, and some iced compound bubbling pleasantly in his glass, smiling benignly at a caricature of himself. He, at all events, paid for his comforts by unremitting labour. But what of the sleek and goodly drones of the hive?

Hugh had some cheerful unmeaning talk with several of his old friends, who regretted that they saw so little of him; he laughed with careful enjoyment at some ancient stories, very familiar to him, told him with rich zest by an acquaintance. But he could not help speculating what was the point of it all. Some of the happiest and most contented men there were high officials, engaged with a sense of solemn importance in doing work that could have been quite as well done by very ordinary people, and much of which, indeed, might as well have been left undone altogether. There was a bishop there, an old family friend of Hugh's father, with whom he entered into talk. The bishop had once been a man of great force and ability, who had been a conspicuous university teacher and had written profound books. But

now he was looking forward with a sense of solemn satisfaction to spending the following day in going down to his diocese in order to preside at a Church *fête*, make a humorous speech, and meet a number of important county people. There was no question of any religious element entering into the function, and Hugh found himself dimly wondering whether such a development of the energies of Christian elders was seriously contemplated in the Gospel. But the bishop seemed to have no doubts on the subject.

Well, anyhow, this was life; this was what men had to do, and what as a rule they enjoyed doing. Hugh had no objection to that, so long as people freely admitted that it was simply their chosen diversion, and that they did it because they liked it. It was only the solemn parade of duty that Hugh disliked.

One of the friends whom Hugh met said to him smilingly that he heard that he had become quite a hermit—adding that he must confess that he did not look like one. Hugh replied laughingly that it was only that he was fortunate enough to discover that his work amused him more and more; at which his friend smiled again, and told him to beware of eccentricity.

Hugh began to wonder whether his simple

and solitary life was indeed tinged with that quality; but he answered that he was finding out to his great delight that he was less afraid than he used to be of living alone, to which his friend, a good-humoured and ineffective man, said that he found that the stir and movement of town kept people from rusting. Hugh wondered—but did not express his wonder—what was supposed to be the use of keeping the blade bright to no purpose; and he wished to ask his contented friend what his object was; but that appeared to be priggish, so Hugh left the question unuttered.

It was, however, with a huge relief, that his business over, Hugh found himself in the homeward train. But at the same time he took himself to task for finding this suspension of routine, this interruption of his literary work, so unpalatable. He realised that he was becoming inconveniently speculative; and that his growing impulse to get behind things, to weigh their value, to mistrust the conventional view of life, had its weak side. After all, the conventional, the normal view reflected the tastes of the majority of mankind. Their life was laid out and regulated on those lines; and the regulating instinct was a perfectly natural development of human temperament. Ought he not to embrace it for himself? was he not,

perhaps, by seeking so diligently for fine flavours and intense impressions, missing the food of the banquet, and sipping only at the sauces? If his own work had been of any particular importance; if he was exercising a wide influence through his books, in the direction of leading others to love the simple sources of happiness, then his withdrawal from ordinary activities and pleasures would be justifiable. Was it justified as it was? Hugh could not answer the question. He only knew that as the train glided on its way, as the streets became less dense, as the country verdure began to occupy more and more of the horizon; as the train at last began to speed through wide fields full of ripening grain, and hamlets half hidden in high elms, he felt the blessed consciousness of returning freedom, the sense of recovering the region of peace and purity dear to his spirit; and the thought of the hot stifling town, with all its veins and arteries full of that endless ebb and flow of humanity, seemed to him like a nightmare from which he was being gradually delivered, and which he was leaving far behind him.

It was not peace, indeed! there was the obstinate spirit, repining, questioning, reviewing all things, striving to pierce the veil. But the veil was not so thick as it had seemed in the

city. There he was distracted, bewildered, agitated. But in this quiet country the veil seemed thin enough. The trees, the flowers, seemed somehow nearer to God, who of very truth appeared to walk as of old in the garden, in the cool of the day.

XXIV

THERE were some days when the whole air of the place, the houses, the fields, the gardens, even the very people that Hugh met in the streets, seemed to be full of romance and poetry. There was no particular quality about the days themselves, that Hugh could ever divine, that produced this impression. Perhaps such moods came oftener and more poignantly when the air was cool and fresh, when the temperate sun filled his low rooms from end to end, lay serene upon the pastures, or danced in the ripples of the stream. But the mood came just as inevitably on dull days, when the sky was roofed with high grey clouds, or even on raw days of winter, when fitful gusts whirled round corners, and when the spouts and cornices dripped with slow rains. In these hours the whole world seemed possessed by some gracious and sweet mystery; everything was in the secret, everything was included in the eager and high-hearted conspiracy. It was all the same, on such days, whether Hugh was alone or with company; if he was among friends or even

strangers, they seemed to look upon him, to speak, to move, with a blithe significance; he seemed to intercept tender messages in a casual glance, to experience the sense of a delighted good-will, such as reigns among a party of friends on an expedition of pleasure. This mood did not produce in Hugh the sense of merriment or high spirits; it was not an excited frame of mind; it was rather a feeling of widespread tenderness, a sort of brotherly admiration. At such moments, the most crabbed and peevish person seemed to be transfigured, to be acting a delightful part for the pleasure of a spectator, and an inner benevolence, a desire to contribute zest and amusement to the banquet of life, seemed to underlie the most fractious gestures or irritable speech. On such days, one seemed to have an affectionate understanding with even slight acquaintances, an understanding which seemed to say, "We are all comrades in heart, and nothing but circumstance and bodily limitation prevents us from being comrades in life." Hugh used to fancy that this mood was like an earnest of the bodiless joy, the free companionship of heaven, if such a place there were, where one should know even as one was known, and be able to enter in and possess, in a flash of thought, the whole fabric of a fellow-creature's soul.

And then if Hugh spent such a day alone, his thoughts seemed to have the same enlightening and invigorating quality. He did not fumble among dreary details, but saw swiftly into the essence of things, so that he smiled as he sat. A book would, on such occasions, touch into life a whole train of pretty thoughts, as a spark leaps along a scattered line of gunpowder. A few remembered lines of poetry, a few notes played by unseen hands on a musical instrument, from a window that he passed in the street, would give a sense of completed happiness; so that one said, "Yes, it is like that!" The palings of gardens, the screen of shrubs through which the pleasance could be dimly discerned within, the high trees holding up their branches to the air, all half guarded, half revealed the same jocund secret. Here, by a hedgerow, in a lane, Hugh would discern the beady eye of a fat thrush which hopped in the tall grass, or plied some tiny business among the stems, lifting his head at intervals to look briskly round. "I see you!" said Hugh, as he used to say long ago to the birds in the Rectory garden, and the bird seemed almost to nod his head in reply.

And then, too, the houses that he passed all breathed the same air of romance. There, perhaps, behind the wall or at the open window, sat or moved the one friend of whom he

was ever in search; but on these days it mattered little that he had not found him; he could wait, he could be faithful, and Hugh could wait too, until the day when all things should be made new. If he walked on days like these through some college court, the thought of the happy, careless, cheerful lives, lived there in strength and brightness, by generation after generation of merry young men, filled Hugh's heart with content; he liked to think that all the world over, in busy offices, in grave parlours, in pleasant parsonages, there were serious, commonplace, well-occupied men, who perhaps, in a tiny flash of memory, sent back a wistful thought to the old walls and gables, the towns with their chiming bells, and remembered tenderly the days of their blithe youth, the old companions, the lively hours. The whole world seemed knit together by sweet and gentle ties: labour and strife mattered little; it was but a cloud upon the path, and would melt into the sunlit air at last.

Hugh used to feel half amused at the irrepressible sense of youth which thrilled him still. As a boy, he had little suspected that the serious elderly men, of settled habits and close-shaved chins, had any such thoughts as these under their battered exteriors. He had thought that such persons were necessarily stolid and com-

fortable persons, believing in committees and correspondence, fond of food and drink, careful of their balance at the bank, and rather disgusted at than tolerant of the irrepressible levity and flightiness of youth. Yet now that he himself was approaching middle age, he was conscious, not indeed of increased levity or high spirits, but of undiminished vigour, wider sympathy, larger joy. Life was not only not less interesting, but it seemed rather to thrill and pulsate with fresh and delightful emotion. If he could not taste it with the same insouciance, it was only because he perceived its quality more poignantly. If life were less full of laughter, it was only because there were sweeter and more joyful things to enjoy. What was best of all about this later delight, was that it left no bitter taste behind it; in youth, a day of abandonment to elation, a day of breezy talk, hearty laughter, active pleasure, would often leave a sense of flatness and dissatisfaction behind it; but the later joy had no sort of weariness as its shadow; it left one invigorated and hopeful.

The most marked difference of all was in one's relations with others. In youth a new friendship had been a kind of excited capture; it had been shadowed by jealousy; it had been a desire for possession. One had not been con-

tent unless one had been sure that one's friend had the same sort of unique regard that one experienced one's self. One had resented his other friendships, and wished to supersede them. But now Hugh had no such feeling. He had no desire to make a relationship, because the relationship seemed already there. If one met a sympathetic and congenial person, one made, as it were, a sort of sunlit excursion in a new and pleasing country. One admired the prospects, surveyed the contours. In old days, one had desired to establish a kind of fortress in the centre, and claim the fruitful land for one's own.

Of course, in Hugh's dealings with the youthful persons whom he encountered in his Cambridge life, he became aware of the existence of the subtle barrier which is erected between youth and middle age; he was conscious often that the delightful egotism of youth has, as a rule, very little deference for, or interest in, the opinions of older persons. Youth is so profoundly absorbed in its own visions, that it is very rarely curious about the duller reveries of older people. It regards them as necessarily dreary, grey, wise, and prudent. The only thing it values is sympathy for itself, just as a child is far more interested in the few chords which it can strum on a piano than in the rich-

est performance of a *maestro*. But Hugh did not find this to be disagreeable, because he was less and less concerned about the effect he produced. He had found out that the joys of perception are at least equal to the joys of expression. Youth cannot wait, it must utter its half-formed wishes, put out its crude fruits; and it used to seem to Hugh that one of the most pathetic and beautiful things in the world was the intensity of feeling, the limitless dreams, that rose shadowily in a boy's mind side by side with the inarticulateness, the failure to command any medium of expression. One of the reasons why the young and clever men are so desperately anxious to be amusing and humorous, is because they desire above all things to see the effect of their words, and long to convulse an audience; while they lack, as a rule, the finished economy in which humour, to be effective, must be clothed.

But, after all, what brought Hugh the best comfort, was the discovery that advancing years did not bring with them any lack of sensitiveness, any dreariness, any sense of dulness. It was indeed rather the reverse. The whole fabric of life was richer, more impassioned, more desirable than he had ever supposed. In youth, emotion and feeling had seemed to him like oases in a desert, oases which one had to quit,

when one crossed the threshold of life, to plod wearily among endless sands. But now he had found that the desert had a life, an emotion, a beauty of its own, and the oases of youthful fancy seemed to be tame and limited by comparison. Hugh still thought with a shudder of old age, which lay ahead of him; but even as he shuddered, he began to wonder whether that too would not open up to him a whole range of experiences and emotions, of which to-day he had no inkling at all. Would life perhaps seem richer still? That was what he dared to hope. Meanwhile he would neither linger nor make haste: he would not catch at the past as containing a lost and faded sweetness; neither would he anticipate, so far as he could help it, the closing of the windows of the soul.

XXV

ONE morning when he was sitting in his rooms at Cambridge, Hugh heard a knock at the door; there presently entered a clergyman, whom at first sight Hugh thought to be a stranger, but whom he almost immediately recognised as an old school-fellow, called Ralph Maitland, whom he had not seen for more than twenty years. Maitland had been an idle, good-humoured boy, full of ideas, a great reader and a voluble talker. Hugh had never known him particularly well; but he remembered to have heard that Maitland had fallen under religious impulses at Oxford, had become serious, had been ordained, and had eventually become a devoted and hard-working clergyman in a northern manufacturing town. He had been lately threatened with a break-down in health, and had been ordered abroad; he had come to Cambridge to see some friends, and hearing that Hugh was in residence there, had called upon him. Hugh was very much interested to see him, and gradually began to discern the

smooth-faced boy he had known, under the worn and hard-featured mask of the priest. They spent most of that day together, and went out for a long walk. Hugh thought he perceived a touch of fanaticism about Maitland, who found it difficult to talk except on matters connected with his parish. But eventually he began to talk of the religious life, and Hugh gradually perceived that Maitland held a very ardent and almost fierce view of the priestly vocation; he drew a picture of the joys of mortification and self-denial which impressed Hugh, partly because of its intensity, and partly also from an uneasy sense of strain and self-consciousness which it gave him. Maitland's idea seemed to be that all impulses, except the religious impulse in its narrowest sense, needed to be sternly repressed; that the highest life was a severe detachment from all earthly things; that the Christian pilgrim marched along a very narrow way, bristling with pitfalls both of opinion and practice; that the way was defined, hazily by Scripture, and precisely by the Church, along which the believer must advance; "Few there be that find it!" said Maitland, with a kind of menacing joy. He was full of the errors of other sects and communions. The Roman doctrine was over-developed, not primitive enough; the Protestant Non-Conform-

ists were neglectful of ecclesiastical ordinances. The only people, it seemed, who were in the right path were a small band of rather rigid Anglicans, who appeared to Maitland to be the precise type of humanity that Christ had desired to develop.

As he spoke, his eye became bright, his lip intolerant, and Hugh was haunted by the text, "The zeal of Thine house hath even eaten me." Maitland seemed to be literally devoured by an idea, which like the fox in the old story of the Spartan boy, appeared to prey on his vitals. Hugh became gradually nettled by the argument, but he was no match for Maitland in scholastic disputation. Maitland felled his arguments with an armoury of texts, which he used like cudgels. Hugh at last said that what he thought was the weak point in Maitland's argument was this—that in every sect and every church there were certainly people who held with the same inflexible determination to the belief that they were absolutely in the right, and had unique possession of the exact faith delivered to the saints; and that each of these persons would be able to justify themselves by a rigid application of texts. Hugh said that it seemed to him to be practically certain that no one of them was infallibly in the right, and that the truth probably lay in certain

wide religious ideas which underlay all forms of Christian faith. Maitland rejected this with scorn as a dangerous and nebulous kind of religion—"nerveless and flabby, without bone or sinew." They then diverged on to a wider ground, and Hugh tried to defend his theory that God called souls to Himself by an infinite variety of appeal, and that the contest was not between orthodoxy on the one hand and heterodoxy on the other, but between pure and unselfish emotion on the one hand and hard and self-centred materialism on the other. To this Maitland replied by saying that such vagueness was one of the darkest temptations that beset cultured and intellectual people, and that the duty of a Christian was to follow precise and accurate religious truth, as revealed in Scripture and interpreted by the Church, however much reason and indolence revolted from the conclusions he was forced to draw. They parted, however, in a very friendly way, and pledged themselves to meet again and continue their discussion on Maitland's return.

A few days afterwards Hugh was surprised to receive a letter from Maitland from Paris which ran as follows:

"*My dear Neville,—It was a great pleasure to see you and to revive the memories of old days.*

I have thought a good deal over our conversation and have made up my mind that I ought to write to you. But first let me ask your pardon, if in the heat of argument I allowed my zeal to outrun my courtesy. I was over-tired and over-strained, and in the mood when any opposition to one's own cherished ideals is deeply and perhaps unreasonably distressing.

"You seemed to me—I will freely grant this—to be a real and candid seeker after truth; but the sheltered and easy life that you have led disguises from you the urgency of the struggle. If you had wrestled as I have for years with infidelity and wickedness, and had seen, as I have a thousand times, how any laxity of doctrinal opinion is always visited upon its victim by a corresponding laxity of moral action, you would feel very differently.

"I think you are treading a very dangerous path. To me it is clear that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in His recorded utterances, in a world of incredible wickedness and vague speculation, deliberately narrowed the issues of life and death. He originated a society, to which He promised the guidance of the Spirit, and woe to the man who tries to find a religion outside of that Church.

"You seem to me, if you will forgive the expression, to be more than half a Pagan; to put

Christianity on a level—though you allow it a certain pre-eminence—with other refining influences. You spoke of art and poetry as if they could bring men to God, and that in spite of the fact that, as I reminded you, there is not a syllable in our Lord's words that could be construed into the least sympathy with art or poetry at all. You called yourself a Christian, and I have no doubt that you sincerely believe yourself to be one; but to me you seemed to be more like one of those cultured Greeks who gave St. Paul an interested hearing on the Acropolis. And yet you seemed to me so genuinely anxious to do what was right, that I am going to ask you, faithfully and sincerely, to reconsider your position. You are drifting into a kind of vague and epicurean optimism. You spoke of the message of God through nature; there is no direct message through that channel, it is only symbolical of the inner divine processes.

"I am not going to argue with you; but I implore you to give some time to a careful study of the New Testament and the Fathers. I feel sure that light will be sent you. Pray earnestly for it, if you have not, as I more than half suspect, given up prayer in favour of a vague aspiration. And be sure of this, that I shall not forget you in my own prayers. I shall offer the Holy Sacrifice in your intention; I shall make humble intercession

for you, for you seem to me to be so near the truth and yet so far away. Forgive my writing thus, but I feel called upon to warn you of what is painfully clear to me.—Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

"*RALPH MAITLAND.*"

This letter touched Hugh very much with a kind of melancholy pathos. He contented himself with writing back that he did indeed, he believed, desire to see the truth, and that he deeply appreciated Maitland's sympathy and interest.

"*No impulse of the heart, on behalf of another, is ever thrown away, I am sure of that. But you would be the first to confess, I know, that a man must advance by whatever light he has; that no good can come of accepting the conclusions of another, if the heart and mind do not sincerely assent; and that if I differ from yourself as to the precise degree of certainty attainable in religious matters, it is not because I despise the Spirit, but because I think that I discern a wider influence than you can admit.*"

He received in reply a short note to say that Maitland felt that Hugh was making the mistake of trusting more to reason than to divine

guidance, but adding that he would not cease to pray for him day by day.

Hugh reflected long and seriously over this strange episode; but he did not experience the smallest temptation to desert a rational process of inquiry. He read the Gospels again, and they seemed to confirm him in his belief that a wide and simple view of life was there indicated. He seemed to see that the spirit which Christ inculcated was a kind of mystical uplifting of the heart to God, not a doctrinal apprehension of His nature. It seemed indeed to him that Christ's treatment of life was profoundly poetical, that it tended to point men to the aim of discerning a beautiful quality in action and life. Those delicate and moving stories that He told—how little they dealt with sacramental processes or ecclesiastical systems? They rather expressed a vivid and ardent interest in the simplest emotions of life. They taught one to be humble, forgiving, sincere, honest, affectionate; there was, it was true, an absence of intellectual and artistic appeal in them, though there were parables, like the parable of the talents, which seemed to point to the duty of exercising faithfully a diversity of gifts; but it was not, Hugh thought, due to a want of sympathy with the things of the mind, but seemed to arise from an intense and burning

desire to prove that the secret lay rather in one's relations to humanity, and even to nature, than in one's intellectual processes and conceptions.

And then as to the point that Christ enforced upon men a fierce ideal of mortification and self-denial, Hugh could see no trace of it. Christ did not turn His back upon the world; He loved to enjoy beautiful sights and sounds, such as birds and flowers. He did indeed clearly assert that one must not be at the mercy of material conditions, and that it was the privilege of man to live along the things of the soul. It was the path of simplicity, not the path of asceticism, that was indicated. Christ seemed to Hugh to be entirely preoccupied with one idea—that love was the strongest and most beautiful thing in the world; and that if one recognised that love alone could be victorious over evil and pain and death, one might be certain that its source and origin lay deepest of all in the vast heart of God, however sadly and strangely that seemed to be contradicted by actual experience. And so Hugh felt that whatever befell him, he would not be persuaded to desert the broad highway of love and beauty and truth, for the narrow and muddy alley of ecclesiastical opinion. The kingdom of God seemed to him to have suffered more

disastrous violence from the hands of bigoted ecclesiastics than it had ever suffered from the onslaughts of the world. Ecclesiastics polluted the crystal stream at its very source by confining the river of life to a small and crooked channel. Hugh prayed with all his heart that he might escape from any system that led him to judge others harshly, to condemn their beliefs, to define their errors. That seemed to him to be the one spirit against which the Saviour had uttered denunciations of an almost appalling sternness. The Lord's Prayer and not the Athanasian Creed seemed to him to sum up the essential spirit of Christ. He believed himself to be following the will of God in yielding to every emotional impulse that made life more sacred, more beautiful, more tender, more hopeful. He believed himself, no less sincerely, to be slighting and despising the tender love of God for all the sheep of His hand, when he made religion into either a subtle and metaphysical thing on the one hand, or a conventional and ceremonious business on the other. The peace that the world cannot give—how desirable, how remote that seemed! How large and free a quality it was! But the peace promised him by his friend seemed to him the apathy of a soul crushed and confined in the narrowest of dungeons, and denying the exist-

ence of the free air and the sun because of the streaming walls and shapen stones which hemmed it round.

XXVI

HUGH went once to spend a few days with an old friend who had held an important living in a big country town. It was a somewhat bewildering experience. His friend was what would be called a practical person and loved organisation—the word was often on his lips—with a consuming passion. Hugh saw that he was a very happy man; he was a big fellow, with a sanguine complexion and a resonant voice. He was always in high spirits: he banged doors behind him, and when he hurried upstairs, the whole house seemed to shake. Every moment of his day was full to the brim of occupation. He could be heard shouting directions in the garden and stables at an early hour; he received and wrote a great many letters; he attended many committees and meetings. He hurried about the country, he made speeches, he preached. Hugh heard one of his sermons, which was delivered with abundant geniality. It consisted of a somewhat obvious paraphrase of a Scripture scene—the slaughter of

the prophets of Baal by Elijah. The preacher described the ugly carnage with much gusto. He then invited his hearers to stamp out evil with similar vigour, and ended with drawing a highly optimistic picture of the world, representing evil and sin as a kind of skulking and lingering contagion, which God was doing His best to get rid of, and which was indeed only kept alive by the foolish perversity of a few abandoned persons, and would soon be extirpated altogether if only enough committees would meet and take the thing up in a businesslike way. It was in a sense a vigorous performance, and Hugh thought that though there was little attempt to bind up the broken-hearted, yet he could conceive its having an inspiriting effect on people who felt themselves on the right side.

His friend found time one evening, as they sat smoking together, to inquire into Hugh's occupations, and read him a friendly lecture on the subject of making himself more useful. Hugh felt that it was useless to argue the question; but when he came away, somewhat dizzied and wearied by the tumultuous energy of his friend's life, he found himself wondering exactly how much resulted from this buzzing and humming organisation. There was not a marked difference between his friend's parish

and other parishes, except that there were certainly more meetings. Hugh had indeed an uneasy sense that a man with less taste for organisation, and more leisure for pastoral intercourse with his flock, might have effected more. The vicar's chief concern indeed seemed to be with the prosperous and healthy members of his parish; if there was a case of destitution, of illness, of sorrow, it was certainly inquired into; some hard-featured lady, with a strong sense of rectitude and usefulness, would be commissioned to go and look into the matter. She generally returned saying cheerfully that she had put things straight, and that it turned out to be their own fault.

But Hugh found his reflections taking a still more sceptical turn. The vicar's theory was that we were all put into the world to be of use to other people. But his idea of helping other people was not to help them to what they desired, but to what he thought it was right that they should desire. He had very little compassion, Hugh saw, for failure and error. If a parishioner was in trouble, the vicar tended to say he had no one to blame but himself for it. Hugh felt that he did not wish to be in his friend's parish. If one was able-bodied and sensible, one was put on a committee or two; if one was unfortunate or

obscure, one was invaded by a district visitor. If one was a Dissenter, one would be treated with a gloomy courtesy—for the vicar was great on not alienating Dissenters, but bringing them in, as he phrased it; and if a Dissenter became an Anglican, the vicar rejoiced with what he believed to be the joy of the angels over a repentant sinner, and made him a parish worker at once.

Then Hugh went further and deeper, and tried to ascertain what he really felt on the subject of usefulness. Tracing back the constitution of society to its origin, he saw that it was clear that every one owed a certain duty of work to the community. A society could not exist in idleness; and every one who was capable of work must work to support himself; and then a certain amount of work must be done by the able-bodied to support those who were either too old or too young to support themselves. But the labouring class, the producers, were forced by the constitution of things to work even more than that; because there were a certain number of persons in the community, capitalists and leisurely people, who lived in idleness on the labour of the workers.

He put aside the great majority of simple workers, the labouring classes, because there

was no doubt about their position. If a man did his work honestly, and supported himself and his family, living virtuously, and endeavouring to bring up his children virtuously, that was a fine simple life. Then came the professional classes, who were necessary too, doctors, lawyers, priests, soldiers, sailors, merchants, even writers and artists; all of them had a work to do in the world.

This then seemed the law of one's being: that men were put into the world, and the one thing that was clear was that they were meant to work; but did duty stop there? had a man, when his work was done, a right to amuse and employ himself as he liked, so long as he did not interfere with or annoy other people? or had he an imperative duty laid upon him to devote his energies, if any were left, to helping other people?

What in fact *was* the obscure purpose for which people were sent into the world? It was a pleasant place on the whole for healthy persons, but there was still a large number of individuals to whom it was by no means a pleasant place. No choice was given us, so far as we knew, as to whether we would enter the world or not, nor about the circumstances which were to surround us. Our lives indeed were strangely conditioned by an abundance

of causes which lay entirely outside our control, such as heredity, temperament, environment. One supposed one's self to be free, but in reality one was intolerably hampered and bound.

The only theory that could satisfactorily account for life as we found it was, that either it was an educational progress, and that we were being prepared for some further existence, for which in some mysterious way our experience, however mean, miserable, and ungentle must be intended to fit us; or else it was all a hopeless mystery, the work of some prodigious power who neither loved or hated, but just chose to act so. In any case it was a very slow process; the world was bound with innumerable heavy chains. There was much cruelty, stupidity, selfishness, meanness abroad; all those ugly things decreased very slowly, if indeed they decreased at all. Yet there seemed, too, to be a species of development at work. But the real mystery lay in the fact that while our hopes and intuitions pointed to there being a great and glorious scheme in the background, our reason and experience alike tended to contradict that hope. How little one changed as the years went on! How ineradicable our faults seemed! How ineffectual our efforts! God indeed seemed to implant

in us a wish to improve, and then very often seemed steadily and deliberately to thwart that wish.

And then, too, how difficult it seemed really to draw near to other people; in what a terrible isolation one's life was spent; even in the midst of a cheerful and merry company, how the secrets of one's heart hung like an invisible veil between us and our dearest and nearest. The most one could hope for was to be a pleasant and kindly influence in the lives of other people, and, when one was gone, one might live a little while in their memories. The fact that some few healthily organised people contrived to live simply and straightforwardly in the activities of the moment, without questioning or speculating on the causes of things, did not make things simpler for those on whom these questions hourly and daily pressed. The people whom one accounted best, did indeed spend their time in helping the happiness of others; but did one perhaps only tend to think them so, because they ministered to one's own contentment?

The only conclusion for Hugh seemed to be this: that one must have a work to be faithfully and resolutely fulfilled; and that, outside of that, one must live tenderly, simply, and kindly, adding so far as one might to the happiness of

others; and that one might resolutely eschew all the busy multiplication of activities, which produced such scanty results, and were indeed mainly originated in order that so-called active people might feel themselves to be righteously employed.

XXVII

One hot still summer day Hugh went far afield, and struck into a little piece of country that was new to him. He seemed to discern from the map that it must have once been a large, low island almost entirely surrounded by marshes; and this turned out to be the case. It was approached along a high causeway crossing the fen, with rich black land on either hand. No high-road led through or out of the village, nothing but grass-tracks and drift-ways. The place consisted of a small hamlet, with an old church and two or three farmhouses of some size and antiquity; it was all finely timbered with an abundance of ancient elm-trees everywhere; they stood that afternoon absolutely still and motionless, with the sun hot on their towering heads; and Hugh remembered how, long ago, as a boy at school, he used to watch, out of the windows of a stuffy class-room, the great elms of the school close rising just thus in the warm summer air, while his thoughts wandered from the dull lesson into a region

of delighted, irrecoverable reverie. To-day he sat for a long time in the little churchyard, the bees humming about the limes with a soft musical note, that rose and fell with a lazy cadence, while doves hidden somewhere in the elms lent as it were a voice to the trees. That soft note seemed to brim over from a spring of measureless content; it seemed like the calling of the spirit of summer, brooding in indolent joy and innocent satisfaction over the long sweet hours of sunshine, while the day stood still to listen. Hugh resigned himself luxuriously to the soft influences of the place, and felt that for a short space he need neither look backwards nor forwards, but simply float with the golden hour.

At last he bestirred himself, realising that he had yet far to go. It was now cold and fresh, and the shadows of the trees lay long across the grass. Hugh struck down on the fen and walked for a long time in the solitary fields, by a dyke, passing a big ancient farm that lay very peacefully among its wide pastures.

The thought of the happy, quiet-minded people that might be living there, leading their simple lives, so little affected by the current of the world, brought much peace into Hugh's mind. It seemed to him a very beautiful thing, with something ancient and tranquil about it. It was all utterly remote from ambition and

adventure, and even from intellectual efficiency; and here Hugh felt himself in a dilemma. His faith did not permit him to doubt that the civilisation and development of the world were in accordance with the purpose of God on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, that expansion brought with it social conditions and problems that appeared to him of an essentially ugly kind, as the herding of human beings into cities, the din and dirt of factories, the millions of lives that were lived under almost servile conditions; and so much of that sad labour was directed to wrong ends, to aggrandisement, to personal luxury, to increasing the comfort of oligarchies. The simple life of the countryside seemed a better ideal, and yet the lot of the rustic day-labourer was both dull and hard. It looked sweet enough on a day of high summer, such as this, when a man need ask for nothing better than to be taken and kept out of doors; but the thought of the farm-hand rising in a cheerless wintry dawn, putting on his foul and stiffened habiliments, setting out in a chilly drizzle to uproot a turnip field, row by row, with no one to talk to and nothing to look forward to but an evening in a tiny cottage-kitchen, full of noisy children—no one could say that this was an ideal life, and he did not wonder that the young men flocked to the

towns, where there was at all events some stir, some amusement. That was the dark side of popular education, of easy communications, of newspapers, that it made men discontented with quiet life, without supplying them with intellectual resources.

Yet with all its disadvantages and discomforts, Hugh could not help feeling that the life of the country was more wholesome and natural for the majority of men, and he wished that the education given in country districts could be directed more to awakening an interest in country things, in trees and birds and flowers, and more, too, to increasing the resources of boys and girls, so that they could find amusing occupation for the long evenings of enforced leisure. The present system of education was directed, Hugh felt, more to training a generation of clerks, than to implanting an aptitude for innocent recreation and sensible amusement. People talked a good deal about tempting men back to the land, but did they not perceive that, to do that, it was necessary to make the agricultural life more attractive? It was a mistake that ran through the whole of modern education, that the system was invented by intellectual theorists and not by practical philosophers. The only real aim ought to be to teach people how to enjoy their work, by making

them efficient, and to enjoy their leisure by arousing the imagination.

Hugh's musings led him on to wonder how it was possible to cultivate a sense of happiness in people; that was the darkest problem of all. Children had the secret of it; they could amuse themselves under the most unpropitious circumstances, and invent games of most surpassing interest out of the most grotesque materials. Then came the age when the sexual relations brought in a fierce and intenser joy; but the romance of courtship and the early days of marriage once over, it seemed that most people settled down on very dull lines, and made such comfort as they could get the only object of their existence. What was it that thus tended to empty life of joy? Was it the presence of anxiety, the failure of vitality, the dull conditions of monotonous labour undertaken for others' gain and not for one's self? Looking back at his own life, Hugh could not discern that his routine work had ever deprived him of zest and interest. It was rather indeed the other way. The suspension of other interests that his life had involved, had sent him back with renewed delight to the occupations and interests of leisure; he had been, he thought, perhaps unusually fortunate in receiving his liberty from mechanical work at a time when

his interests were active and his zest undimmed. But how was one to guard the quality of joy, how could it be stimulated and increased, if it began in the course of nature to flag? It was clear that life could not have for every one, nor at all times for any one, that quality of eager and active delight, that uplifting of the heart and mind alike, which sometimes surprised one, when one felt an intensity of gladness and gratitude at being simply one's self, and at standing just at that point in life, surrounded and enriched by exactly the very things one most loved and desired—the feeling that must have darted into Sinbad's mind when he saw that the very sand of the valley in which he lay consisted of precious germs. Probably most people had some moments, oftenest perhaps in youth, of this full-flushed, conscious happiness. And then again most people had considerable tracts of quiet contentment, times when their work prospered and their recreations amused. But how was one to meet the hours when one was neither happy nor contented; when the mind flapped wearily like a loosened sail in a calm, when there was no savour in the banquet, when one went heavily? It was of no use then to summon joy to one's assistance, to call spirits from the vast deep, if they did not obey one's call. There ought, Hugh thought, to be a reserve of

sober piety and hopefulness on which one could draw in those dark days. There were no doubt many equable and phlegmatic people who, as the old poet said,

> "Perfacile angustis tolerabant finibus aevum."
> (In narrow bounds an easy life endured.)

But for those whose perceptions were keen, who lived upon joy, from the very constitution of their nature, how were such natures—and he knew that he was of the number—to avoid sinking into the mire of the Slough of Despond, how were they to rejoice in the valley of humiliation? What was to be their well in the vale of misery? How were the pools to be filled with water?

The answer seemed to be that it could only be achieved by work, by effort, by prayer. If one had definite work in hand, it carried one over these languid intervals. How often had the idea of setting to work in these listless moods seemed intolerable; yet how soon one forgot one's self in the exercise of congenial labour! Here came in the worth of effort, that one could force one's self to the task, commit one's self to the punctual discharge of an unwelcome duty. And if even that failed, then one could cast one's self into an inner re-

gion, in the spirit of the Psalmist, when he said, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." One could fling one's prayer into the dark void, as the sailors from a sinking ship shoot a rocket with a rope attached to the land, and then, as they haul it in, feel with joy the rope strain tight, and know that it has found a hold.

Hugh felt that such experience as this, experience, that is, in the vital force of prayer, might be called a subjective experience, and could not be put to a scientific test. But for all that, there was nothing which of late years had so grown upon him as the consciousness of the effectiveness of a certain kind of prayer. This was not a mechanical repetition of verbal forms, but a strong and secret uplifting of the heart to the Father of all. There were moments when one seemed baffled and powerless, when one's own strength seemed utterly unequal to the burden; prayer on such occasions did not necessarily bring a perfect serenity and joy, though there were times when it brought even that; but it brought sufficient strength; it made the difficult, the dreaded thing possible. Hugh had proved this a hundred times over, and the marvel to him was that he did not use it more; but the listless mind sometimes could not brace itself to the effort; and then it seemed to Hugh that he was as one

who lay thirsting, with water in reach of his nerveless hand. Still there were few things of which he was so absolutely certain as he was of the abounding strength of prayer; it seemed to reveal a dim form moving behind the veil of things, which in the moment of entreaty seemed to suspend its progress, to stop, to draw near, to smile. Why the gifts from that wise hand were often such difficult things, stones for bread, serpents for fish, Hugh could not divine. But he tended less and less to ask for precise things, but to pray in the spirit of the old Dorian prayer that what was good might be given him, even if he did not perceive it to be good, and that what was evil might be withheld, even if he desired it.

While he thus mused, walking swiftly, the day darkened about him, drawing the colour out of field and tree. The tides of the sky thickened, and set to a deep enamelled green, and a star came out above the tree-tops. Now and then he passed through currents of cool air that streamed out of the low wooded valleys, rich with the fragrance of copse and dingle. An owl fluted sweetly in a little holt, and was answered by another far up the hill. He heard in the breeze, now loud, now low, the far-off motions of the wheels of some cart rumbling blithely homewards. All else was

still. At last he came out on the top of the wolds; the road stretched before him, a pale ribbon among dusky fields; and the lights of the distant village pierced through the darker gloom of sheltering trees. Hugh seemed that night to walk with his unknown friend close beside him, answering his hopes, stilling his vague discontents with a pure and tender faithfulness, that left him nothing to desire, but that the sweet nearness might not fail him. At such a moment, dear and wonderful as the world was, he felt that it held nothing so beautiful or so dear as that sweet companionship, and that if he had been bidden, in that instant, strong and content as he was, to enter the stream of death, a firm hand and a smiling face would have lifted him, as the stream grew shallower about him, safe and satisfied, up on the farther side.

XXVIII

AMONG the most interesting of the new friends that Hugh made at Cambridge was a young Don who was understood to hold advanced socialistic views. What was more important from Hugh's point of view was that he was a singular frank, accessible, and lively person, full of ideas and enthusiasms. Hugh was at one time a good deal in his company, and at one time used to feel that the charm of conversation with him was, not that they discussed things, or argued, or had common interests, but that it was like setting a sluice open between two pools; their two minds, like moving waters, seemed to draw near, to intermingle, to linger in a subtle contract. His friend, Sheldon by name, was a great reader of books; but he read, Hugh thought, in the same way that he himself read, not that he might master subjects, annex and explore mental provinces, and classify the movement of thought, but rather that he might lean out into a misty haunted prospect, where mysterious groves

concealed the windings of uncertain paths, and the turrets of guarded strongholds peered over the woodland. Hugh indeed guessed dimly that his friend had a whole range of interests of which he knew nothing, and this was confirmed by a conversation they had when th y had walked one day together into the deep country. They took a roa l that seemed upon the map to lead to a secluded village, and then to lose itself among the fields, and soon came to the hamlet, a cluster of old-fashioned houses that stood very prettily on a low scarped gravel hill that pushed out into the fen. They betook themselves to the churchyard, where they found a little ancient conduit that gushed out at the foot of the hill. This they learned had once been a well much visited by pilgrims for its supposed healing qualities. It ran out of an arched recess into a shallow pool, fringed with sedge, and filled with white-flowered cresses and forget-me-not. Below their feet lay a great stretch of rich water-meadows, the wooded hills opposite looming dimly through the haze. Here they sat for a while, listening to the pleasant trickle of the spring, and the conversation turned on the life of villages, the lack of amusement, the dulness of field labour, the steady drift of the young men to the towns. Hugh regretted this and said that he wished the country clergy

would try to counteract the tendency; he spoke of village clubs and natural-history classes. Sheldon laughed quietly at his remarks, and said, "My dear Neville, it is quite refreshing to hear you talk. It is not for nothing that you bear the name of Neville; you are a mediæval aristocrat at heart. These opinions of yours are as interesting as fossils in a bed of old blue clay. Such things are to be found, I believe, imbedded in the works of Ruskin and other patrons of the democracy. Why, you are like a man who sits in a comfortable first-class carriage in a great express, complacently thinking that the money he has paid for his ticket is the motive force of the train; you are trying to put out a conflagration with a bottle of eau-de-Cologne. The battle is lost, and the world is transforming itself, while you talk so airily. You and other leisurely people are tolerated, just as a cottager lets houseleek grow on his tiles; but you are not part of the building, and if there is a suspicion that you are making the roof damp, you will have to be swept away. The democracy you want to form is making itself, and sooner or later you will have to join in the procession."

Hugh laughed serenely at his companion's vehemence. "Oh," he said, "I am a mild sort of socialist myself; that is, I see that it is

coming, I believe in equality, and I don't question the rights of the democracy. But I don't pretend to like it, though I bow to it; the democracy seems to me to threaten nearly all the things that are to me most beautiful—the woodland chase, the old house among its gardens, the village church among its elms, the sedge-fringed pool, the wild moorland—and all the pleasant varieties, too, of the human spirit, its fantastic perversities, its fastidious reveries, its lonely dreams. All these must go, of course; they are luxuries to which no individual has any right; we must be drilled and organised; we must do our share of the work, and take our culture in a municipal gallery, or through cheap editions of the classics. No doubt we shall get the 'joys in the widest commonalty spread' of which Wadsworth speaks; and the only thing that I pray is that I may not be there to see it."

"You are a fine specimen of the individualist," said Sheldon, "and I have no desire to convert you—indeed we speak different languages, and I doubt if you could understand me; there is to be no such levelling as you suppose, rather the other way indeed; we shall not be able to do without individualism, only it will be pleasantly organised. The delightful thing to me is to observe that you are willing to let us have a little of your culture at your own price, but we

shall not want it; we shall have our own culture, and it will be a much bigger and finer thing than the puling reveries of hedonists; it will be like the sea, not like the scattered moorland pools."

"Do you mean," said Hugh, "when you talk so magniloquently of the culture of the future, that it will be different from the culture of the present and of the past?"

"No, no," said Sheldon, "not different at all, only wider and more free. Do you not see that at present it is an elegant monopoly, belonging to a few select persons, who have been refined and civilised up to a certain point? The difficulty is that we can't reach that point all at once—why, it has taken you thirty or forty centuries to reach it!—and at present we can't get further than the municipal art-gallery, and lectures on the ethical outlook of Browning. But that is not what we are aiming at, and you are not to suppose that yours is a different ideal of beauty and sensibility from ours. What I object to is that you and your friends are so select and so condescending. You seem to have no idea of the movement of humanity, the transformation of the race, the corporate rise of emotion."

"No," said Hugh, "I have no idea what you are speaking of, and I confess it sounds to me

very dull. I have never been able to generalise. I find it easy enough to make friends with homely and simple people, but I think I have no idea of the larger scheme. I can only see the little bit of the pattern that I can hold in my hand. Every human being that I come to know appears to me strangely and appallingly distinct and untypical; of course one finds that many of them adopt a common stock of conventional ideas, but when you get beneath that surface, the character seems to me solitary and aloof. When people use words like 'democracy' and 'humanity,' I feel that they are merely painting themslves large, magnifying and dignifying their own idiosyncrasies. It does not uplift and exalt me to feel that I am one of a class. It depresses and discourages me. I hug and cherish my own differences, my own identity. I don't want to suppress my own idiosyncrasies at all; and what is more, I do not think that the race ma es progress that way. All the people who have really set their mark upon the world have been individualists. Not to travel far for instances, look at the teaching of our Saviour; there is not a hint of patriotism, of the rights of society, of common effort, of the corporateness of which you speak. He spoke to the individual. He showed that if the individual could be simple, generous, kindly forgiv-

ing, the whole of society would rise into a region where organisation would be no longer needed. These results cannot be brought about by legislation; the spirit must leap from heart to heart, as the flower seeds itself in the pasture."

"Would you be surprised to hear," said Sheldon, smiling, "that I am in accordance with most of your views? Of course legislation is not the end: it is only a way of dealing with refractory minorities. The highest individual freedom is what I aim at. But the mistake you make is in thinking that the individual effects anything; he is only the link in the chain. It is all a much larger tide, which is moving resistlessly in the background. It is this movement that I watch with the deepest hope and concern. I do not profess to direct or regulate it, it is much too large a thing for that; I merely desire to remove as far as I can the obstacles that hinder the incoming flood."

"Well," said Hugh, smiling, "as long as you do not threaten my individual freedom, I do not very much care."

"Ah," said Sheldon, "now you are talking like the worst kind of aristocrat, the early-Victorian Whig, the man who has a strong belief in popular liberty, combined with an equally strong sense of personal superiority."

"No, indeed!" said Hugh, "I bow most sin-

cerely before the rights of society. I only claim that as long as I do not interfere with other people, they will not interfere with me. I recognise to the full the duty of men to work, but when I have complied with that, I want to approach the world in my own way. I am aware that reason tells me I am one of a vast class, and that I have certain limitations, but at the same time instinct tells me that I am sternly and severely isolated. No one and nothing can intrude into my mind and self; and I feel inclined to answer you like Dionysus in the *Frogs of Aristophanes*, who says to Hercules when he is being hectored, "Don't come pitching your tent in my mind, you have a house of your own!"—*Secretum meum mihi*, as St. Francis of Assisi said—identity is the one thing of which I am absolutely sure. One must go on perceiving, drawing in impressions, feeling, doubting, suffering; one knows that souls like one's own are moving in the mist; and if one can discern any ray of light, any break in the clouds, one must shout one's loudest to one's comrades; but you seem to me to want to silence my lonely experience by the vote of the majority, and the majority seems to me essentially a dull and tiresome thing. Of course this sounds to you the direst egotism; but when one has labelled a thing egotistic, one has not necessarily con-

demned it, because the essence of the world is its egotism. You would no doubt say that we are no more alone than the leaves of a tree, that the sap which is in one leaf at one moment is the next moment in another, and that we are more linked than we know. I would give much to have that sense, but it is denied me, and meanwhile the pressure of that corporate force of which you speak seems to me merely to menace my own liberty, which is to me both sacred and dear."

Sheldon smiled. "Yes," he said, "we do indeed speak different languages. To me this sense of isolation of which you speak is merely a melancholy phantom. I rejoice to see one of a great company, and I exult when the sap of the great tree flows up into my own small veins; but do not think that I disapprove of your position. I only feel that you are doing unconsciously the very thing that I desire you to do. But at the same time I think that you are missing a great source of strength, seeing a thing from the outside instead of feeling it from the inside. Yet I think that is the way in which artists help the world, through the passionate realisation of themselves. But you must not think that you are carrying away your share of the spoil to your lonely tent. It belongs to all of us, even what you have yourself won."

Hugh felt that Sheldon probably was speaking the truth. He thought long and earnestly over his words. But the practical outcome of his reflections was that he realised the uselessness of trying to embrace an idea which one did not instinctively feel. He knew that his real life did not lie, at all events for the present, in movements and organisations. They were meaningless words to him. His only conception of relationships was the personal conception. He desired with all his heart the uplifting, the amelioration of human beings: he could contribute best, he thought, to that, by speaking out whatever he perceived and felt, to such a circle as was in sympathy with him. Sheldon, no doubt, was doing exactly the same thing; there were multitudes of people in the world, who would agree with neither Sheldon nor himself, amiable materialists, whose only instinct was to compass their own prosperity and comfort, and who cared neither for humanity nor for beauty, except in so far as they ministered to their own convenience. Hugh did not sympathise with such people, and indeed he found it hard to conceive, if what philosophers and priests predicated of the purpose of God was true, how such people came into being. The mistake, the generous mistake, that Sheldon made, was to think that humanity was righting itself. It was per-

haps being righted, but ah, how slowly! The error was to believe that one's theories were the right ones. It was all far larger, vaster, more mysterious than that. Hugh knew that the element in nature and the world to which he himself responded most eagerly was the element of beauty. The existence of beauty, the appeal it made to the human spirit, seemed to him the most hopeful thing in the world. But he could not be sure that the salvation of the world lay there. Meantime, while he felt the appeal, it was his duty to tell it out among the heathen, just as it was Sheldon's duty to preach the corporateness of humanity; but Hugh believed that the truth lay with neither, but that both these instincts were but as hues of a prism, that went to the making up of the pure white light. They were rather disintegrations of some central truth, component elements of it rather than the truth itself. They were not in the least inconsistent with each other, though they differed exceedingly; and so he determined to follow his own path as faithfully as he could, and not in response to strident cries of justice and truth, and still less in deference to taunts of selfishness and epithets of shame, to lend a timorous hand to a work in the value of which he indeed sincerely believed, but which he did not believe to be his own work. The tide was indeed rolling

in, and the breakers plunging on the beach; but so far as helping it on went, it seemed to him to matter little whether you sat and watched it with awe and amazement, with rapture and even with terror, or whether you ran to and fro, as Sheldon seemed to him to be doing, busying himself in digging little channels in the sand, that the roaring sea, with the wind at its back, might foam a little higher thus upon the shore.

XXIX

THE morning sun fell brightly on Hugh's breakfast-table; and a honeycomb that stood there, its little cells stored with translucent sweetness, fragrant with the pure breath of many flowers, sparkled with a golden light. Hugh fell to wondering over it. One's food, as a rule, transformed and dignified by art, and enclosed in vessels of metal and porcelain, had little that was simple or ancient about its associations; how the world indeed was ransacked for one's pleasure! meats, herbs, spices, minerals—it was strange to think what a complexity of materials was gathered for one's delight; but honey seemed to take one back into an old and savage world. Samson had gathered it from the lion's bones, Jonathan had thrust his staff into the comb, and put the bright oozings to his lips; humanity in its most ancient and barbarous form had taken delight in this patiently manufactured confection. But a further thought came to him; the philosopher spoke of a development in nature, a slow mov-

ing upward through painfully gathered experience. It was an attractive thought, no doubt, and gave a clue to the bewildering differences of the world. But after all how incredibly slow a progress it was! The whole course of history was minute enough, no doubt, in comparison with what had been; but so far as the records of mankind existed, it was not possible to trace that any great development had taken place. The lines of species that one saw to-day were just as distinct as they had been when the records of man began. They seemed to run, like separate threads out of the tapestry, complete and entire from end to end, not mixing or intermingling. Fish, birds, quadrupeds —some had died out indeed, but no creature mentioned in the earliest records showed the smallest sign of approximating or drawing near to any other creature; no bird had lost its wings or gained its hands; no quadruped had deserted instinct for reason. Bees were a case in point. They were insects of a marvellous wisdom. They had a community, a government, almost laws. They knew their own business, and followed it with intense enthusiasm. Yet in all the centuries during which they had been robbed and despoiled for the pleasure of man, they had learned no prudence or caution. They had not even learned

to rebel. Generation after generation, in fragrant cottage gardens, they made their delicious store, laying it up for their offspring. Year after year that store had been rifled; yet for all their curious wisdom, their subtle calculations, no suspicion ever seemed to have entered their heads of what was going forward. They did not even try to find a secret place in the woods for their nest; they built obediently in the straw-thatched hives, and the same spoliation continued. A few days before, Hugh had visited a church in the neighbourhood, and had become aware of a loud humming in the chancel. He found that an immense swarm of bees had been hatched out in the roof, and were dying in hundreds, in their attempt to escape through the closed windows. There were plenty of apertures in the church through which they could have escaped, if they had had any idea of exploration. But they were content to buzz feebly up and down the panes, till strength failed them, and they dropped down on to the sill among the bodies of their brothers. An old man who was digging in the churchyard told Hugh that the same thing had gone on in the church every summer for as long as he could remember.

And yet one did not hesitate to accept the

Darwinian theory, on the word of scientific men, though the whole of visible and recorded experience seemed to contradict it. Even stranger than the amazing complexity of the whole scheme, was the incredible patience with which the matter was matured. What was more wonderful yet, man, by his power of observing the tendencies of nature, could make her laws to a certain extent serve his own ends. He could, for instance, by breeding carefully from short-legged sheep, in itself a fortuitous and unaccountable variation from the normal type, produce a species that should be unable to leap fences which their long-legged ancestors could surmount; he could thus save himself the trouble of erecting higher fences. This power in man, this faculty for rapid self-improvement, differentiated him from all the beasts of the field; how had that faculty arisen? It seemed a gap that no amount of development could bridge. If nature had all been perfect, if its rules had been absolutely invariable, if existence were conditioned by regular laws, it would be easy enough to believe in God. And yet as it was, it seemed so imperfect, and in some ways so unsatisfactory; so fortuitous in certain respects, so wanting in prevision, so amazingly deliberate. Such an infinity of care seemed lavished on the delicate structure of the

smallest insects and plants, such a prodigal fancy; and yet the laws that governed them seemed so strangely incomplete, like a patient, artistic, whimsical force, working on in spite of insuperable difficulties. It looked sometimes like a conflict of minds, instead of one mind.

And then, too, the wonder which one felt seemed to lead nowhere. It did not even lead one to ascertain sure principles of conduct and life. The utmost prudence, the most careful attempt to follow the guidance of those natural laws, was liable to be rendered fruitless by what was called an accident. One's instinct to retain life, to grasp at happiness, was so strong; and yet, again and again, one was taught that it was all on sufferance, and that one must count on nothing. One was set, it seemed, in a vast labryinth; one must go forward, whether one would or no, among trackless paths, overhung by innumerable perils. The only thing that seemed sure to Hugh was that the more one allowed the awe, the bewilderment, to penetrate one's heart and mind, the more that one indulged a fearful curiosity as to the end and purpose of it all, the nearer one came, if not to learning the lesson, yet at least towards reaching a state of preparedness that might fit one to receive the further confidence of God. Such

tranquility as one gained by putting aside the problems which encompassed one, must be a hollow and vain tranquillity. One might indeed never learn the secret; it might be the will of God simply to confront one with the desperate problem; but a deep instinct in Hugh's heart told him that this could not be so; and he determined that he, at all events, would go about the world as a patient learner, grasping at any hint that was offered him, whether it came by the waving of grasses on the waste, by the droop of flower-laden boughs over a wall, from the strange horned insect that crawled in the dust of the highway, or from the soft gaze of loving eyes, flashing a message into the depths of his soul.

The pure faint lines of the wold that he saw from his window on the far horizon, rising so peacefully above the level pasture-land, with the hedgerow elms—what did they stand for? The mind reeled at the thought. They were nothing but a gigantic cemetery. Every inch of that soft chalk had been made up by the life and death, through millions of years, of tiny insects, swimming, dying, mouldering in the depths of some shapeless sea. Surely such a thought had a message for his soul, not less real than the simpler and more direct message of peace that the soft pale outlines, the

gentle foldings of the hills, seemed to lend to his troubled spirit; in such a moment his faith rose strong; he trod a shining track through the deeps of God.

XXX

THE air that day was full of sunlight like fine gold, and put Hugh in mind of *the city that was pure gold like unto clear glass!*—he had often puzzled over that as a child; gold always seemed so opaque a thing, a surface without depth; but, after all, it was true of the air about him to-day—clear and transparent indeed, with a perfect clarity and purity, and yet undoubtedly all tinged and lucent liquid gold. He sat long on a bench in the college garden, a little paradise for the eye and mind; it had been skilfully laid out, and Hugh used to think that he had never seen a place so enlarged by art, where so much ground went to the acre! All the outer edge of it was encircled by trees—elms, planes, and limes; the borders, full of flowering shrubs, were laid out in graceful curves, and in the centre was a great oval bed of low-growing bushes, with the velvet turf all about it, sweeping in sunlit vistas to left and right. It gave somehow a sense of space and extent, achieved Hugh could

not guess how. To-day all the edges of the borders were full of flowers; and as he wandered among them he was more than ever struck with a thought that had often come to him, the mystery of flowers! The extraordinary variety of leaf and colour, the whimsical shapes, the astonishing invention displayed, and yet an invention of an almost childish kind. There was a clump of pink blooms, such as a child might have amused itself with cutting out of paper; here rose tall spires, with sharp-cut, serrated leaves at the base, but the blue flowers on the stem were curiously lipped and horned, more like strange insects than flowers. And then the stainless freshness and delicacy of the texture, that a touch would soil! These gracious things, uncurling themselves hour by hour, blooming, fading, in obedience to the strange instinct of life, surprised him by a sudden thrill. Here was a bed of irises, with smooth blade-like stalks, snaky roots, the flowers of incredible shapes, yet no two exactly alike, all splashed and dappled with the richest colours; and then the mixture of blended fragrance; the hot, honeyed smell of the candytuft, with aromatic spicy scents of flowers that he could not name. Here again was the eschscholtzia, with its pointed horns, its bluish leaf, and the delicate orange petals, yet with a scent, pure but acid,

which almost made one shudder. There was some mind behind it all, Hugh felt, but what a mind! how leisurely, how fanciful, how unfathomable! For whose pleasure were all these bright eccentric forms created? Certainly not for the pleasure of man, for Hugh thought of the acres and acres of wheat now rising in serried ranks in the deep country, with the poppies or the marigolds among them, all quietly unfolding their bells of scarlet flame, their round, sunlike faces, where no eye could see them, except the birds that flew over. Could it be for God's own pleasure that these flower shapes were made? They could not even see each other, but rose in all their freshness, as by a subtle conspiracy, yet blind to the world about them, conscious only of the sunlight and the rain, with no imaginative knowledge, it would seem, or sympathy with their brethren. It always filled Hugh with a sort of pity to think of the sightless life of trees and flowers, each rising in its place, in plain, on hill, and yet each enclosed within itself, with no consciousness of its own beauty, and still less conscious of the beauty of its fellows. And what was the life that animated them? Where did it come from? Where did it pass to? Had they any sense of joy, of sorrow? It was hard to believe that they had not. It always dis-

tressed Hugh to see flowers gathered or boughs broken; it seemed a hateful tyranny to treat these delicate creatures so for an hour's pleasure. The sight of flowers picked and then thrown carelessly down by the roadside, gave him a sense of helpless indignation. The idyllic picture of children wandering in spring, filling their hands with flower-heads torn from bank and copse, appeared to Hugh as only painful. Man, from first to last, seemed to spread a ruthless destruction around him. Hugh's windows overlooked a stream-bend much frequented by fishermen; and it was a misery to see the poor dace, that had lived so cool and merry a life in the dark pools of the stream, poising and darting among the river-weed, hauled up struggling to the air, to be greeted with a shout of triumph, and passed about, dying and tortured, among the hot hands, in the thin choking air. Was that what God made them for? What compensation awaited them for so horrible and shameful an end.

Hugh felt with a sigh that the mystery was almost unendurable, that God should make, hour by hour, these curious and exquisite things, such as flowers and fishes, and thrust them, not into a world where they could live out a peaceful and innocent life, but into the midst of dangers and miseries. Sometimes, beneath his

windows, he could see a shoal of little fish flick from the water in all directions at the rush of a pike, one of them no doubt horribly engulfed in the monster's jaws.

Why was so hard a price to be paid for the delightful privilege of life? Was it indifference or carelessness, as a child might make a toy and weary of it? It seemed like it, though Hugh could not bear to think that it was so; and yet for thousands of centuries the same thing had been going on all over the world, and no one seemed an inch nearer to the mystery of it all. How such thoughts seemed to shrivel into nothing the voluble religious systems that professed to explain it all! The misery of it was that, here and everywhere, God seemed to be explaining it Himself every day and hour, and yet one missed the connection which could make it all intelligible—the connection, that is, between God, as man in his heart conceived of Him, and God as He wrote Himself large in every field and wood. On what hypothesis of pure benevolence and perfect justice could all these restless lives, so full of pain and suffering, and all alike ending in death and disappearance, be explained?

Yet, stranger still, the mystery did not make him exactly unhappy. The fresh breeze blew through the trees, the flowers blazed and shone

in the steady sun, the intricate lawns lay shimmering among the shubberies, and Hugh seemed full of a baffling and baffled joy. At that moment, at all events, God wished him well, and spread for him the exquisite pageant of life and colour and scent; the very sunshine stole like some liquid essence along his veins, and filled him with unreasoning happiness. And yet he too was encompassed by a thousand dangers; there were a hundred avenues of sense, of emotion, by which some dark messenger might steal upon him. Perhaps he lurked behind the trees of that sweet paradise, biding his time to come forth. But to-day it seemed a species of treachery to feel that anything but active love and perfect benevolence was behind these smiling flowers, those tall trees rippling in the breeze, that lucent sky. To-day at least it seemed God's will that he should be filled with peaceful content and gratitude. He would drink the cup of sweetness to-day without retrospect or misgiving. Would the memory of that sweetness stay his heart, and sustain his soul when the dark days came, when the garden should be bare and dishevelled, and a strange dying smell should hang about the walks; and when perhaps his own soul should be sorrowful even unto death?

XXXI

THE perception of one of the great truths of personality came upon Hugh in a summer day which he had spent, according to his growing inclination, almost alone. In the morning he had done some business, some writing, and had read a little. It was a week when Cambridge was almost wholly given up to festivity, and the little river that flowed beneath his house echoed all day long to the wash of boats, the stroke of oars, and the cheerful talk of happy people. The streets were full of gaily-dressed persons hurrying to and fro. This background of brisk life pleased Hugh exceedingly, so long as he was not compelled to take any part in it, so long as he could pursue his own reveries. Part of the joy was that he could peep at it from his secure retreat; it inspirited him vaguely, setting, as it were, a cheerful descant to the soft melody of his own thoughts. In the afternoon he went out leisurely into the country; it was pleasant to leave the humming town, so full of active life and merry gossip, and to find that in the

country everything was going forward as though there were no pressure, no bustle anywhere. The solitary figures of men hoeing weeds in among the growing wheat, and moving imperceptibly across the wide green fields, pleased him. He wound away through comfortable villages, among elms and orchards, choosing the by-ways rather than the high-roads, and plunging deeper and deeper into country which it seemed that no one ever visited except on rustic business. There was a gentle south wind which rippled in the trees; the foliage had just begun to wear its late burnished look, and the meadows were full of high-seeded grass, gilded or silvered with buttercups and ox-eye daisies.

He stopped for a time to explore a little rustic church, that stood, in a careless mouldering dignity, in the centre of a small village. Here, with his gentle fondness for little omens, he became aware that some good thing was being prepared for him, for in the nave of the church, under the eaves, he noted no less than three swarms of bees, that had made their nest under the timbers of the roof, and were just awakening into summer activity. The drones were being cast out of the hives, and in an angle formed by the buttress of the church, Hugh found a small lead cistern of water, which was a curious sight; it was all full of struggling bees fallen from the

roof above, either solitary bees who had darted into the surface, and could not extricate themselves, or drones with a working bee grappled, intent on pinching the life out of the poor bewildered creature, the day of whose reckoning had come. Hugh spent a long time in pulling the creatures out and setting them in the sun, till at last he was warned by slanting shadows that the evening was approaching, and he set off upon his homeward way.

In a village near Cambridge he encountered a friend, a bluff man of science, who was engaged in a singular investigation. He kept a large variety of fowls, and tried experiments in cross-breeding, noting carefully in a register the plumage and physical characteristics of the chickens. He had hired for the purpose a pleasant house, with a few paddocks attached, where he kept his poultry. He invited Hugh to come in, who in his leisurely mood gladly assented. The great man took him round his netted runs, and discoursed easily upon the principles that he was elucidating. He spoke with a mild enthusiasm; and it surprised and pleased Hugh that a man of force and gravity should spend many hours of every day in registering facts about the legs, the wattles, and the feathers of chickens, and speak so gravely of the prospect of infinite interest that opened before him. He said that he

had worked thus for some years, and as yet felt himself only on the fringe of the subject. They walked about the big garden, where the evening sun lay pleasantly on turf and borders of old-fashioned flowers; and with the complacent delight with which a scientific man likes to show experiments to persons who are engaged in childish pursuits such as literature, the philosopher pointed out some other curiosities, as a plant with a striped flower, whose stalk was covered with small red protuberances, full of a volatile and aromatic oil, which, when a lighted match was applied to them, sent off a little airy flame with a dry and agreeable fragrance, as the tiny ignited cells threw out their inflammable perfume.

Hugh was pleasantly entertained by these sights, and went home in a very blithe frame of mind; a little later he sat down to write in his own cool study. He was working at a task of writing which he had undertaken, when a thought darted suddenly into his mind, suggested by the image of the man of science who had beguiled an afternoon hour for him. It was a complicated thought at first, but it grew clearer. He perceived, as in a vision, humanity moving onwards to some unseen goal. He took account, as from a great height, of all those who are in the forefront of thought and

intellectual movement. He saw them working soberly and patiently in their appointed lines. He discerned that though all these persons imagined that they had purposely taken up some form of intellectual labour, and were pursuing it with a definite end in view, they had really no choice in the matter, but were being led along certain ways by as sure and faithful an instinct as the bees that he had seen that day intent on their murderous business. Each of these savants, in whatever line his labours lay, felt that he was striding forward on a quest proposed, as he imagined, by himself. But Hugh saw, with an inward certainty of vision, that the current which moved them was one with which they could not interfere, and that it was but the inner movement of some larger and wider mind which propelled them. He saw too, that many of his friends, men of practical learning, who were occupied, with a deep sense of importance and concern, in accumulating a little treasure of facts and inferences, in science, in history, in language, in philosophy, were but led by an inner instinct, an implanted taste, along the paths they supposed themselves to be choosing and laboriously pursuing. They encouraged each other at intervals by the bestowal of little honours and dignities; but at this moment Hugh saw them as mere toilers; like the

merchants who spend busy and unattractive lives, sitting in noisy offices, acquiring money with which to found a family, with the curious ambition that descendants of their own, whom they could never see, should lead a pleasant life in stately country-houses, intent upon shooting and games, on social gatherings and petty business. He saw clearly that the merchant and the philosopher alike had no clear idea of what they desired to effect, but merely followed a path prepared and indicated. And then he saw that the minds which were really in the forefront of all were the poetical minds, the interpreters, the prophets, who saw, not in minute detail, and in small definite sections, but with a wide and large view, whither all this discovery, this investigation, was tending. The investigation worthless and minute enough in itself, as it seemed to be when examined at a single point, had at least this value, that some principle, some inspiration for life could be extracted from it, something which would permeate slowly the thought of the world, set pulses beating, kindle generous visions, and teach men ultimately the lesson that once learnt, puts life into a different plane, the lesson that God is behind and over and in all things, and that it is His purpose and not our own that is growing and ripening.

This mighty truth came home to Hugh that quiet afternoon with a luminous certitude, a vast increase of hopelessness such as he had seldom experienced before. But the thought in its infinite width narrowed itself like a great stream that passes through a tiny sluice; and Hugh saw what his own life was to be; that he must no longer form plans and schemes, battle with uncongenial conditions, make foolish and fretful efforts in directions in which he had no real strength or force; but that his only vocation must lie in faithfully and simply interpreting to himself and others this gigantic truth: the truth, namely, that no one ought ever to indulge in gloomy doubts and questionings about what his work in the world was to be, but that men and women alike ought just to advance, quietly and joyfully, upon the path so surely, so inevitably indicated to them. The more, he saw, that one listens to this inner voice, the more securely does the prospect open; by labour, not by fretful performance of disagreeable duty, but by eager obedience to the constraining impulse, is the march of the world accomplished. For some the path is quiet and joyful, for some it is noisy and busy, for some it is dreary and painful; for some it is even what we call selfish, cruel and vile. But we must advance along it whether we will or no.

And it became clear to Hugh that the more simply and clearly we feel this, the more will all the darker elements of life drop away from the souls of men; for the darker elements, the delays, the sorrows, the errors, are in vast measure the shadows that come from our believing that it is we who cause and originate, that our efforts and energies are valuable and useful. They are both, when God is behind them; but when we strive to make them our own, their pettiness and insignificance are revealed.

It must not be said that Hugh never fell from this deep apprehension of the truth. There were hours when he was haunted by the spectres of his own unregenerate action, when he regretted mistakes, when he searched for occupation; but he grew to see that even these sad hours only brought out for him, with deeper and clearer significance, the essential truth of the vision, which did indeed transform his life. When he was ill, anxious, overwrought, he grew to feel that he was being held quietly back for a season; and it led to a certain deliberate disentangling of himself from the lesser human relations, from a consciousness that his appointed work was not here, but that he was set apart and consecrated for a particular work, the work of apprehending and discerning,

of interpreting and expressing, the vast design of life; it represented itself to him in an image of children wandering in fields and meadows, just observing the detail and the petty connection of objects, the hedgerow, the stream appearing in certain familiar places, by ford or bridge, the trees that loomed high over the nearer orchard, and seemed part of it. And then one of these children, he thought, might, on a day of surprises, be taken up to the belfry of the old church-tower in the village, and out upon the roof. Then in a moment the plan, the design of all would be made clear, the hidden connection revealed. Those great towering elms, that rose in soft masses above the orchard, were in reality nothing but the elms that the child knew so well from the other side, that overhung his own familiar garden. There, among the willows, the stream passed from ford to bridge, and on again, circling in loops and curves. The village would be a different place after that, not known by an empirical experience, but apprehended as a construction, as a settled design, where each field and garden had its appointed place.

And so Hugh, with a great effort of utter resignation, a resignation which had something passionate and eager about it, cast himself into the Father's hands, and prayed that he might

no longer do anything but discern and follow the path that was prepared for him. Long and late these thoughts haunted him; but when he went at last through the silent house to his own room, it was with a sense that he was reposing in perfect trustfulness upon the will of One who, whether He led him forward or held him back, knew with a deep and loving tenderness one thing that he, and he only, could do in the great complicated world. That world was now hushed in sleep. But the weir rushed and plunged in the night outside; and over the dark trees that fringed the stream there was a tender and patient light, that stole up from the rim of the whirling globe, as it turned its weary sides, with punctual obedience, to the burning light of the remote sun.

XXXII

HUGH found that, as he grew older, he tended to read less, or rather that he tended to recur more and more to the familiar books. He had always been a rapid reader, and had followed the line of pure pleasure, rather than pursued any scheme of self-improvement. He became aware, particularly at Cambridge, that he was by no means a well-informed man, and that his mind was very incompletely furnished. He was disposed to blame his education for this, to a certain extent; it had been almost purely classical; he had been taught a little science, a little mathematics, and a little French; but the only history he had done at school had been ancient history, to illustrate the classical authors he had been reading; and the result had been a want of mental balance; he knew nothing of the modern world or the movement of European history; the whole education had in fact been linguistic and literary; it had sacrificed everything to accuracy, and to the consideration of niceties of expression. It might

have been urged that this was in itself a training in the art of verbal expression; but here it seemed to Hugh that the whole of the training had confined itself to the momentary effect, the ring of sentences, the adjustment of epithets, and that he had received no sort of training in the art of structure. He had never been made to write essays or to arrange his materials. He thought that he ought to have been taught how to deal with a subject; but his exercises had been almost wholly translations from ancient classical languages. He had been taught, in fact, how to manipulate texture, but never how to frame a design. The result upon his reading had been that he had always been in search of phrases, of elegant turns of expression and qualification, but he had never learned how to apprehend the ideas of an author. He had not cared to do this for himself, and from the examination point of view it had been simply a waste of time. All that he had ever tried to do had been so to familiarise himself with the style, the idiosyncrasies of authors, that he might be able to reproduce such superficial effects in his compositions, or to disentangle a passage set for translation. He had not arrived at any real mastery of either Greek or Latin, and it seemed to him, reflecting on this process long afterwards, that the system had en-

couraged in him a naturally faulty and dilettante bent in literature. In reading, for instance, a dialogue of Plato, he had never cared to follow the argument, but only to take pleasure in beautiful, isolated thoughts and images; in reading a play of Sophocles, he had cared little about the character-drawing or the development of the dramatic situation; he had only striven to discover and recollect extracts of gnomic quality, sonorous flights of rhetoric, illustrative similes.

The same tendency had affected all his own reading, which had lain mostly in the direction of *belles-lettres* and literary annals; and, in the course of his official life, literature had been to him more a beloved recreation than a matter of mental discipline. The result had been that he found himself, in the days of his emancipation, with a strong perception of literary quality, and a wide knowledge of poetical and imaginative literature; he had, too, a considerable acquaintance with the lives of authors; and this was all. He could read French with facility, but with little appreciation of style. Both German and Italian were practically unknown to him.

Hugh made the acquaintance, which ripened into friendship, of a young Fellow of a neighbouring college, whose education had been conducted on entirely different lines. This young

man had been educated privately, his health making it impossible for him to go to school. He had read only just enough of classics to enable him to pass the requisite examinations, and he had been trained chiefly in history and modern languages. He had taken high honours in history at Cambridge, and had settled down as a historical lecturer. As this friendship increased, and as Hugh saw more and more of his friend's mind, he began to realise his own deficiencies. His friend had an extraordinary grasp of political and social movements. He was acquainted with the progress of philosophy and with the development of ideas. It was a brilliant, active, well-equipped intellect, moving easily and with striking lucidity in the regions of accurate knowledge. Sometimes, in talking to his friend, Hugh became painfully aware of the weakness of his own slouching, pleasure-loving mind. It seemed to him that, in the intellectual region, he was like a dusty and ragged tramp, permeated on sunshiny days with a sort of weak, unsystematic contentment, dawdling by hedge-row ends and fountain-heads, lying in a vacant muse in grassy dingles, and sleeping by stealth in the fragrant shadow of hay-ricks; while his friend seemed to him to be a brisk gentleman in a furred coat, flashing along the roads in a motor-car, full of useful activity and

pleasant business. His friend's idea of education was of a strict and severe mental discipline; he did not over-estimate the value of knowledge, but regarded facts and dates rather as a skilled workman regards his bright and well-arranged tools. What he did above all things value was a keen, acute, clear, penetrating mind, which arrayed almost unconsciously the elements of a problem, and hastened unerringly to a conclusion. The only point in which Hugh rated his own capacity higher, was in a certain relish for literary effect. His friend was a great reader, but Hugh felt that he himself possessed a power of enjoyment, an appreciation of colour and melody, a thrilled delight in what was artistically excellent, of which his friend seemed to have little inkling.

His friend could classify authors, and could give off-hand a brilliant and well-sustained judgment on their place in literary development, which fairly astonished Hugh. But the difference seemed to be that his friend had mastered books with a sort of gymnastic agility, and that his mind had reached an astonishing degree of technical perfection thereby; but Hugh felt that to himself books had been a species of food, and that his heart and spirit had gained some intensity from them, some

secret nourishment, which his friend had to a certain extent missed.

Hugh had been so stirred on several occasions by a sense of shame at realising the impotence and bareness of his own mind, that he laid down an ambitious scheme of self-improvement, and attacked history with a zealous desire for his own mental reform. But he soon discovered that it was useless. Such an effort might have been made earlier in life, before habits had been formed of desultory enjoyment, but it was in vain now. He realised that accurate knowledge simply fell through his mind like a shower of sand; a little of it lodged on inaccessible ledges, but most of it was spilled in the void. He saw that his only hope was to strengthen and enlarge his existing preferences, and that the best that he could hope to arrive at was to classify and systematise such knowledge as he at present possessed. It was too late to take a new departure, or to aim at any completeness of view. The mental discipline that he required, and of which he felt an urgent need, must be attained by a diligent sorting of his own mental stores, haphazard and disjointed as they were. And after all, he felt, there was room in the world for many kinds of minds. Mental discipline from the academical point of view was a very import-

ant thing, perhaps the thing that the ordinary type of public schoolboy was most in need of. But there was another province too, the province of mental appreciation, and it was in this field that Hugh felt himself competent to labour. It seemed to him that there were many young men at the university, capable of intellectual pleasure, who had been starved by the at once diffuse and dignified curriculum of classical education. Hugh felt that he himself had been endowed with an excess of the imaginative and artistic quality, and that, owing to natural instincts and intellectual home-surroundings, he had struck out a path for himself; books had been to Hugh from his earliest years channels of communication with other minds. He could not help doubting whether they ever developed qualities or delights that did not naturally exist in a rudimentary form in the mind which fell under their influences. He could not, in looking back, trace the originating power of any book on his own mind; the ideas of others had rather acted in fertilising the germs which lay dormant in his own heart. They had deepened the channels of his own thoughts, they had revealed him to himself; but there had always been, he thought, an unconscious power of selection at work; so that uncongenial ideas,

unresponsive thoughts, had merely danced off the surface without affecting any lodgment. He had gained in taste and discrimination, but he could not trace any impulse from literature which had set him exploring a totally unfamiliar region. Sometimes he had resolutely submitted his mind to the leadership of a new author; but he had always known in his heart that the pilgrimage would be in vain. He felt that he would have gained if he had known this more decisively, and if he had spent his energies more faithfully in pursuing what was essentially congenial to him.

There were certain authors, certain poets who, he had instinctively felt from the outset, viewed life, nature, and art from the same standpoint as himself. His mistake had been in not defining that standpoint more clearly, but in wandering vaguely about, seeking for a guide, for way-posts, for beaten tracks. What he ought to have done was to have fixed his eyes upon the goal, and fared directly thither.

But this misdirected attempt, over which he wasted some precious months, to enlarge the horizon of his mind, had one valuable effect. It revealed to him at last what the object of his search was. He become aware that he was vowed to the pursuit of beauty, of a definite and almost lyrical kind. He saw that his mind

was not made to take in, with a broad and vigorous sweep, the movement of human endeavour; he saw that he had no conception of wide social or political forces, of the development of communities, of philosophical ideals. These were great and high things, and his studies gave him an increased sense of their greatness and significance. But Hugh saw that he could neither be a historian nor a philosopher, but that his work must be of an individualistic type. He saw that the side of the world which appealed to himself was the subtle and mysterious essence of beauty—the beauty of nature, of art, of music, of comradeship, of relations with other souls. The generalisations of science had often a great poetical suggestiveness; but he had no vestige of the scientific temper which is content to deduce principles from patient and laborious investigation. He saw that his own concern must be with the emotions and the hearts of his fellows, rather than with their minds; that if he possessed any qualities at all, they were of a poetical kind. The mystery of the world was profound and dark, though Hugh could see that science was patiently evolving some order out of the chaos. But the knowledge of the intricate scheme was but a far-off vision, an august hope; and meanwhile men had to meet life as they could, to

evolve enough hopefulness, enough inspiration from their complicated conditions to enable them to live a full and vigorous life.

Poetry, to give a large name to the various interpretations of subtle beauty, could offer in some measure that hope, that serenity; could lend the dignity to life which scientific investigations tended to sweep away. Science seemed to reveal the absolute pettiness, the minute insignificance of all created things, to show how inconsiderable a space each separate ndividual occupied in the sum of forces; the thought weighed heavily upon Hugh that he was only as the tiniest of the drops of water in a vast cataract that had rushed for thousands of years to the sea; it was a paralysing conception. It was true that the water-drop had a definite place; yet it was the outcome and the victim of monstrous forces; it leaped from the mountain to the river, it ran from the river to the sea; it was spun into cloud-wreaths; it fell on the mountain-top again; it was perhaps congealed for centuries in some glacier-bed; then it was free again to pursue its restless progress. But to feel that one was like that, was an unutterably dreary and fatiguing thought. The weary soul perhaps was hurried thus from zone to zone of life, never satisfied, never tranquil; with a deep instinct for freedom and tran-

quillity, yet never tranquil or free. Then, into this hopeless and helpless prospect, came the august message of poetry, revealing the transcendent dignity, the solitariness, the majesty of the indomitable soul; bidding one remember that though one was a humble atom in a vast scheme, yet one had the sharp dividing sense of individuality; that each individual was to himself the measure of all things, a fortress of personality; that one was not merely whirled about in a mechanical order; but that each man was as God Himself, able to weigh and survey the outside scheme of things, to approve and to disapprove; and that the human will was a mysterious stronghold, impregnable, secure, into which not even God Himself could intrude unsummoned. How small a thing to the eye of the scientist were the human passions and designs, the promptings of instinct and nature; but to the eye of the poet how sublime and august! These tiny creatures could be dominated by emotions—love, honour, patriotism, liberty—which could enable them, frail and impotent as they were, to rise majestically above the darkest and saddest limitations of immortality. They could be racked with pain, crushed, tormented, silenced; but nothing could make them submit, nothing could force them to believe that their pains

were just. Herein lay the exceeding dignity of the human soul, that it could arraign its Creator before its own judgment-seat, and could condemn Him there. It could not, it seemed, refuse to be called into being, but, once existent, it could obey or not as it chose. Its joys might be clouded, its hopes shattered, but it need not acquiesce; and this power of rebellion, of criticism, of questioning, seemed to Hugh one of the most astonishing and solemn things in the world. And thus to Hugh the history of the individual, the aspirations and longings of mankind, seemed to contain a significance, a sanctity that nothing could remove.

He did not believe that this rebellious questioning was justified, but this did not lessen his astonishment at the fact that the human soul could claim a right to decide, by its own intuitions, what was just and what was unjust, and could accuse the Eternal Lord of Life of not showing it enough of the problem for it to be able to acquiesce in the design, as it desired to do. Hugh believed that he was justified in holding that as Love was the strongest power in the world, the Creator and Inspirer of that love probably represented that quality in the supremest degree, though this was an inference only, and not supported by all the phenomena of things. But it seemed to him the one clue

through the darkness; and this secret hope was perhaps the highest and best thought that came to him from searching the records of humanity and the conceptions of mortal minds.

And therefore Hugh felt that he was on the side of the individual; and that he touched life in that relation. Literature then must be for him, in some form or other, an attempt to quicken the individual pulse, to augment the individual sense of significance. He must abstain from what was probably a higher work; but he must not lose faith thereby. He must set himself with all his might to preach a gospel of beauty to minds which, like his own, were incapable of the larger mental sweep, and could only hope to disentangle the essence of the moment, to refine the personal sensation. That was the noble task of high literature, of art, of music, of the contemplation of nature, that it could give the mind a sense of largeness, of dim and wistful hope, of ultimate possibilities. The star that hung in the silent heaven—it was true that it was the creation of mighty forces, that it had a place, a system, a centrifugal energy, a radiation of its own. That was in a sense the message of a star; but it had a further appeal, too, to the imaginative mind, in that it hung a glowing point of ageless light, infinitely remote, intolerably mysterious, a symbol of all

the lustrous energies of the aspiring soul. And in one sense, indeed, the pure imagination could invest such vast creatures of God with even a finer, freer charm than scientific apprehension. Science could indicate its bulk, its motions, its distance, even analyse its very bones; but it could do no more; while the spirit could glide, as in an aerial chariot, through the darkness of the impalpable abyss, draw nearer and nearer in thought to the vast luminary, see unscathed its prodigious vents spouting flame and smoke, and hear the roar of its furnaces; or softly alight upon fields of dark stones, and watch with awe the imagined progress of forms intolerably huge, swollen as with the bigness of nightmare Here was the strange contrast, that science was all on fire to learn the truth; while the incomprehensible essence of the soul, with its limitless visions, was capable of forming conceptions which the truth should disappoint. And here again came in a strange temptation. If life and identity were to be indefinitely prolonged, then Hugh had no wish but to draw nearer to the truth, however hard and even unpalatable it might be; but if, on the other hand, this life were all, then it seemed that one might be even the happier for comfortable and generous delusions.

Hugh, then, felt that if the old division of

more highly developed minds was the true one; if one was either Aristotelian or Platonist, that is to say, if one's tendencies were either scientific or idealistic, there was no doubt on which side of the fight he was arrayed; not that he thought of the two tendencies as antagonistic; and if indeed, the scientific mind tended to contemn the idealistic mind, as concerning itself with fancies rather than with facts, he felt that there could not be a greater mistake than for the idealistic mind to contemn the scientific. Rather, he thought, the idealists should use the scientific toilers as patient, humble, and serviceable people, much as the Dorian conquerors of Sparta used the Helots, and encouraged them to perform the necessary and faithful work of investigation for which the idealists were unfitted. The mistake which men of scientific temper made, Hugh thought, was to concern themselves only or mainly, with material phenomena. The idealistic and imaginative tendencies of man were just as much realities, and no amount of materialism could obliterate them. What was best of all was to import if possible a scientific temper into idealistic matters; not to draw hasty or insecure generalisations, nor to neglect phenomena however humble. Books, then, for Hugh were, in their largest aspect, indications and manifestations of the idealistic nature of

man. The interest about them was the perceiving of the different angles at which a thought struck various minds, the infusion of personality into them by individuals, the various interpretations which they put upon perceptions, the insight into various kinds of beauty and hopefulness which the writers displayed.

And thus Hugh turned more and more away from the critical apprehension of imaginative literature to the mystical apprehension of it. A critical apprehension of it was indeed necessary, for it initiated one into the secrets of expression and of structure, in which the force of personality was largely displayed, taking shape from the thought in them, as clothes take shape from their wearers. But deeper still lay the mystical interpretation. In the world of books he heard the voice of the soul, sometimes lamenting in desolate places, sometimes singing blithely to itself, as a shepherd sings upon a headland, in sight of the blue sea; sometimes there came a thrill of rapture into the voice, when the spirit was filled to the brim with the unclouded joys of the opening world, the scent of flowers, the whispering of foliage in great woods, the sweet harmonies of musical chords, the glance of beloved eyes, or the accents of some desired voice; and then again all this would fade and pale, and the soul would sit

wearied out, lamenting its vanished dreams and the delicate delights of the springtime, in some wild valley overhung with dark mountains, under the dreadful and inscrutable eye of God. Life, how insupportable, how beautiful it seemed! Full of treasures and terrors alike, its joys and its woes alike unutterable. The strangest thing of all: that the mind of man was capable of seeing that there was a secret, a mystery about it all; could desire so passionately to know it and to be satisfied, and yet forbidden even dimly to discern its essence.

What, after all, Hugh reflected, was the end of reading? Not erudition nor information, though many people seemed to think that this was a meritorious object. Professed historians must indeed endeavour to accumulate facts, and to arrive if possible at a true estimate of tendencies and motives; the time had not yet come, said the most philosophical historians, for any deductions to be drawn as to the development of the mind of the world, the slow increase of knowledge and civilisation; and yet that was the only ultimate value of their work, to attempt, namely, to arrive at the complex causes and influences that determined the course of history and progress. Hugh felt instinctively that his mind, impatient, inaccurate, subtle rather than profound, was ill adapted for

such work as this. He felt that it was rather his work to arrive, if he could, at a semi-poetical, semi-philosophical intrepretation of life, and to express this as frankly as he could. And thus reading must be for him an attempt to refine and quicken his insight into the human mind, working in the more delicate regions of art. He must study expression and personality; he must keep his spirit sensitive to any hint of truth or beauty, any generous and ardent intuition, any grace and seemliness of thought. He was fond of books of travel, as opening to him a larger perspective of human life, and revealing to him the conclusions to which experience and life had brought men of other nationalities and other creeds. Biography was his most beloved study, because it opened out to him the vast complexity of human motive; but he thought that its chief value had been in revealing to him the extraordinary part that conventional and adopted beliefs and motives played in the majority of lives.

His reading, then, began to have for him a deep and special significance. He was no philosopher; he found that the metaphysical region, where one stumbled among the dim ultimate causes of things, only gave him a sense of insecurity and despair; but he was in a sense a psychologist; his experience of life had taught

him to have an inkling of the influences that affect character, and still more of the stubborn power of character in resisting influences. Poetry was to him a region in which one became aware of strange and almost magical forces, which came floating out of unknown and mysterious depths—it was a world of half-heard echoes, momentary glimpses, mysterious appeals. In history and in biography one saw more of the interacting forces of temperament; but in poetry, as the interpreter of nature, one found one's self among cries and thrills which seemed to rise from the inner heart of the world. It was the same with religion; but here the forces at work so often lost their delicacy and subtlety by being compounded with grosser human influences, entangled with superstitions, made to serve low and pitiful ends. In poetry there was none of this—it was the most disinterested thing in the world. In the pure medium of words, coloured by beauty and desire, all the remote, holy, sweet secrets of the heart were blended into a rising strain; and it was well to submit one's self, tranquilly and with an open heart, to the calling of these sweet voices.

Hugh was aware that his view was not what would be called a practical one; that he had no fibre of his being that responded to what were called civic claims, political urgencies, social

reforms, definite organisations; he felt increasingly that these things were but the cheerful efforts of well-meaning and hard-headed persons to deal with the bewildering problems, the unsatisfactory débris of life. Hugh felt that the only possible hope of regeneration and upraising lay in the individual; and that if the tone of individual feeling could be purified and strengthened, these organisations would become mere unmeaning words. The things that they represented seemed to Hugh unreal and even contemptible, the shadows cast on the mist by the evil selfishnesses, the stupid appetites, the material hopes of men. As simplicity of life and thought became more and more dear to him, he began to recognise that, though there was no doubt room in the world, as it was, for these other busy and fertile ideas, yet that his own work did not lie there. Rather it lay in defining and classifying his own life and experience; in searching for indubitable motives, and noble possibilities that had almost the force of certainties; of gathering up the secrets of existence, and speaking them as frankly, as ardently, as melodiously as his powers would admit, if by any means he might awaken other hearts to the truths which had for him so sweet and constraining an influence.

XXXIII

An art which had for Hugh an almost divine quality was the art of music; an art dependent upon such frail natural causes, the vibration of string and metal, yet upon the wings of which the soul could fly abroad further than upon the wings of any other art. There was a little vignette of Bewick's, which he had loved as a child, where a minute figure sits in a tiny horned and winged car, in mid-air, throwing out with a free gesture the reins attached to the bodies of a flight of cranes; the only symbol of his destination a crescent moon, shining in dark skies beyond him. That picture had always seemed to Hugh a parable of music, that it gave one power to fly upon the regions of the upper air, to use the wings of the morning.

And yet, if one analysed it, what a totally inexplicable pleasure it was. Part of it, the orderly and rhymthical beat of metre, such as comes from striking the fingers on the table, or tapping the foot upon the floor; how deep lay the instinct to bring into strict se-

quence, where it was possible, the mechanical movements of nature, the creaking of the boughs of trees, the drip of water from a fountain-lip, the beat of rolling wheels, the recurrent song of the thrush on the high tree; and then there came the finer sense of intricate vibration. The lower notes of great organ-pipes had little indeed but a harsh roar, that throbbed in the leaded casements of the church; but climbing upwards they took shape in the delicate noises, the sounds and sweet airs of which Prospero's magic isle was full. And yet the rapture of it was inexpressible in words. Sometimes those airy flights of notes seemed to stimulate in some incomprehensible way the deepest emotions of the human spirit; not indeed the intellectual and moral emotions, but the primal and elemental desires and woes of the heart.

Hugh could hardly say in what region of the soul this all took place. It seemed indeed the purest of all emotions, for the mind lost itself in a delight which hardly even seemed to be sensuous at all, because in the case of other arts, one was conscious of pleasure, conscious of perception, of mingling identity with the thing seen or perceived; but in music one was rapt almost out of mortality, in a kind of bodiless joy.

One of Hugh's causes of dissatisfaction with

the education he had received was that, though he had a considerable musical gift, he had never been taught to play any musical instrument. Partly indolence and partly lack of opportunity had prevented him from attaining any measure of skill by his own exertions, though he had once worked a little, very fitfully, at the theory of music, and had obtained just enough knowledge of the composition of chords to give him an intelligent pleasure in disentangling the elements of simple progressions. Another trifling physical characteristic had prevented his hearing as much music as he would have wished. The presence of a crowd, the heat and glare of concert-rooms, the uncomfortable proximity of unsympathetic or possibly loquacious persons, combined with a dislike of fixed engagements outside of the pressure of official hours of work, had kept him, very foolishly, from musical performances. Thus almost the only music with which he had a solid acquaintance was ecclesiastical music; he had been accustomed as a boy to frequent the cathedral services in the town where he was at school; and in London he constantly went on Sundays to St. Paul's or Westminster. It was no doubt the stately *mise-en-scene* of these splendid buildings that affected Hugh as much even as the music itself, though the music was like the soul's voice speaking

gently from beautiful lips. Hugh always, if he could, approached St. Paul's by a narrow lane among tall houses, that came out opposite the north transept. At a certain place the grey dome became visible, strangely foreshortened, like a bleak mountain-head, and then there appeared, framed by the house-fronts, the sculptured figure of the ancient lawgiver, with a gesture at once vehement and dignified, that crowded the top of the pediment. Then followed the hush of the mighty church, the dumb falling of many foot-falls upon the floor, the great space of the dome, in which the mist seemed to float, the liberal curves, the firm proportions of arch and pillar; the fallen daylight seemed to swim and filter down, stained with the tincture of dim hues; the sounds of the busy city came faintly there, a rich murmur of life; then the soft hum of the solemn bell was heard, in its vaulted cupola; and then the organ awoke, climbing from the depth of the bourdon; the movement of priestly figures, the sweet order of the scene, the sense of high solemnity, made a shrine for the holy spirit of beauty to utter its silvery voice. In Westminster it was different; the richer darkness, the soaring arches, the closer span, the incredible treasure of association and memory made it a more mysterious place, but the sound lacked the

smothered remoteness that gave such a strange, repressed economy to the music of St. Paul's. At Westminster it was more cheerful, more tangible, more material. But the tranquillising, the inspiring effect upon the spirit was the same. Perhaps it was not technical religion of which Hugh was in search. But it was the religion which was as high above doctrine and creed and theology as the stars were above the clouds. The high and holy spirit inhabiting eternity seemed to emerge from the metaphysic, the science of religion, from argument and strife and dogma, as the moon wades, clear and cold, out of the rack of dusky vapours. Such a voice, as that gentle, tender, melancholy, and still joyful voice, that speaks in the 119th Psalm, telling of misunderstanding and persecution, and yet dwelling in a further region of peace, came speeding into the very labyrinth of Hugh's troubled heart. "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; O seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments." It was not inspiration, not a high-hearted energy, that music brought with it; it was rather a reconciliation of all that hurt or jarred the soul, an earnest of intended peace.

But, after all, this was not music pure and simple; it was music set in a rich frame of both sensuous and spiritual emotions. Hugh

realised that music had never played a large part in his life, but had been one of many artistic emotions that had spoken to him in divers manners. There was one fact about music which lessened its effect upon Hugh, and that was the fact that it seemed to depend more than other arts upon what one brought to it. In certain moods, particularly melancholy moods, when the spirit was fevered by dissatisfaction or sorrow, its appeal was irresistible; it came flying out of the silence, like an angel bearing a vial of fragrant blessings. It came flooding in, like the cool brine over scorched sands, smoothing, refreshing, purifying. There seemed something direct, authentic, and divine about the message of music in such moods; there seemed no interfusion of human personality to distract, because the medium was more pure.

Sometimes, for weeks together at Cambridge, Hugh would go without hearing any music at all, until an almost physical thirst would fall upon him. In such an arid mood, he would find himself tyrannously affected by any chance fragment of music wafted past him; he would go to some cheerful party, where, after the meal was over, a piano would be opened, and a simple song sung or a short piece played. This would come like a draught of water to a weary traveller, bearing Hugh away out of his sur-

roundings, away from gossip and lively talk, into a remote and sheltered place; it was like opening a casement from a familiar and lighted room, and leaning out over a dim land, where the sunset was slowly dying across the rim of the tired world.

Hugh always found it easy to make friends with musicians. They generally seemed to him to be almost a race apart; their art seemed to withdraw them in a curious way from the world, and to absorb into itself the intellectual vigour which was as a rule, with ordinary men, distributed over a variety of interests. He knew some musicians who were men of wide cultivation, but they were very much the exception; as a rule, they seemed to Hugh to be a simple, and almost childlike species, fond of laughter and elementary jests, with emotions rather superficial than deep, and not regarding life from the ordinary standpoint at all. The reason lay, Hugh believed, in the nature of the medium in which they worked; the writer and the artist were brought into direct contact with humanity; it was their business to interpret life, to investigate emotion; but the musician was engaged with an art that was almost mathematical in its purity and isolation; he worked under the strictest law, and though it required a severe and strong intellectual grip, it was not a process

which had any connection with emotions or with life. But Hugh always felt himself to be inside the charmed circle, and though he knew but little of the art, musical talk always had a deep interest for him, and he seemed to divine and understand more than he could explain or express.

But still it was true that music had played no part in his intellectual development; he had never approached it on that side; it had merely ministered to him at intervals a species of emotional stimulus; it had seemed to him to speak a language, dim and unintelligible, but the purport of which he interpreted to be somehow high and solemn. There seemed indeed to be nothing in the world that spoke in such mysterious terms of an august destiny awaiting the soul. The origin, the very elements of the joy of music were so absolutely inexplicable. There seemed to be no assignable cause for the fact that the mixture of rhythmical progress and natural vibration should have such a singular and magical power over the human soul, and affect it with such indescribable emotion.

He had sometimes seen, half with amusement, half with a far deeper interest, the physical effect which the music of some itinerant piano-organ would produce upon street children; they seemed affected by some curious intoxication;

their gestures, their smiles, their self-conscious glances, their dancing movements, so unnatural in a sense, and yet so instinctive, made the process appear almost magical in its effects. Though it did not affect him so personally, it seemed to have a similarly intoxicating effect on Hugh's own mind. Even if the particular piece that he was listening to had no appeal to his spirit, even if it were only a series of lively cascades of tripping notes, his thoughts, he found, took on an excited, an irrepressible tinge. But if, on the other hand, the time and the mood were favourable, if the piece were solemn or mournful, or of a melting sweetness, it seemed for a moment to bring a sense of true values into life, to make him feel, by a silent inspiration, the rightness and the perfection of the scheme of the world.

One evening a friend of Hugh's, who was organist of one of the important college chapels, took him and a couple of friends into the building. It had been a breathlessly hot summer day, but the air inside had a coolness and peace which revived the languid frame. It was nearly dark, but the great windows smouldered with deep fiery stains, and showed here and there a pale face, or the outline of a mysterious form, or an intricacy of twined tabernacle-work. Only a taper or two were lit in the shadowy

choir; and a light in the organ-loft sent strange shadows, a waving hand or a gigantic arm, across the roof, while the quiet movements of the player were heard from time to time, the passage of his feet across the gallery, or the rustling of the leaves of a book. Hugh and his friends seated themselves in the stalls; and then for an hour the great organ uttered its voice—now a soft and delicate strain, a lonely flute or a languid reed outlining itself upon the movement of the accompaniment; or at intervals the symphony worked up to a triumphant outburst, the trumpets crashing upon the air, and a sudden thunder outrolling; the great pedals seeming to move, like men walking in darkness, treading warily and firmly; until the whole ended with a soft slow movement of perfect simplicity and tender sweetness, like the happy dying of a very old and honourable person, who has drunk his fill of life and blessings, and closes his eyes for very weariness and gladness, upon labour and praise alike.

The only shadow of this beautiful hour was that in this rapt space of tranquil reflection one seemed to have harmonised and explained life, joy, and disaster alike, to have wound up a clue, to have brought it all to a peaceful and perfect climax of silence, like a tale that is told; and then it was necessary to go out to the world

again with all its bitterness, its weariness, and its dissatisfaction—till one almost wondered whether it was wise or brave to have chased and captured this strange phantom of imagined peace.

Yes, it was wise sometimes, Hugh felt sure! to have refused it would have been like refusing to drink from a cool and bubbling wayside spring, as one fared on a hot noon over the shimmering mountain-side—refused, in a spirit of false austerity, for fear that one would thirst again through the dreary leagues ahead. As long as one remembered that it was but an imagined peace, that one had not attained it, it was yet well to remember that the peace was real, that it existed somewhere, even though it was still shut within the heart of God. However slow the present progress, however long the road, it was possible to look forward in hope, to know that one would move more blithely and firmly when the time should come for the desired peace to be given one more abundantly; it helped one, as one stumbled and lingered, to look a little further on and to say, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast set my heart at liberty."

XXXIV

HUGH'S professional life had given him little opportunity for indulging artistic tastes. He had been very fond as a boy of sketching, especially architectural subjects; it had trained his powers of observation; but there had come a time when, as a young man, he had deliberately laid his sketching aside. The idea in his mind had been that if one desired to excel in any form of artistic expression, one must devote all one's artistic faculty to that. He had been conscious of a certain diffuseness of taste, a love of music and a love of pictorial art being both strong factors in his mind; but he was also dimly conscious that he matured slowly; that he had none of the facile grasp of difficult things which characterised some of his more able companions; his progress was always slow, and he arrived at mastery through a long wrestling with inaccuracy and half knowledge; his perception was quick, but his grasp feeble, while his capacity for forgetting and losing his hold on things was great. He

therefore made a deliberate choice in the matter, guided, he now felt, rather by a kind of intuition than by any very definite principle, and determined to restrict his artistic energies to a single form of art. His father, he remembered, had remonstrated with him, and had said that by giving up sketching he was sacrificing a great resource of recreation and amusement. He had no answer at the time to the criticism, but it seemed to him that he knew his own mind in the matter, and that as he could not hope, he thought, to attain to any real excellence in draughtsmanship, it had better be cut off altogether, and his energies, such as they were—he knew that the spring was not a copious one—confined to a more definite channel.

As life went on, and as time became more and more precious, as his literary work more and more absorbed him, he drew away from the artistic region; in his early years of manhood he had travelled a good deal, and the seeing of pictures had always been part of the programme; but his work became heavier, and the holidays had tended more and more to be spent in some quiet English retreat, where he could satisfy his delight in nature, and re-read some of the old beloved books. A certain physical indolence was also a factor, an indolence which

made wandering in a picture-gallery always rather a penance; but he contrived at intervals to go and look at pictures in London in a leisurely way, both old and new; and he had one or two friends who possessed fine works of art, which could be enjoyed calmly and quietly. He was aware that he was losing some catholicity of mind by this—but he knew his limitations, and more and more became aware that his constitutional energy was not very great, and needed to be husbanded. He was quite aware that he was not what would be called a cultivated person, that his knowledge both of art and music was feeble and amateurish; but he saw, or thought he saw, that people of wide cultivation often sacrificed in intensity what they gained in width; and as he became gradually aware that the strongest faculty he possessed was the literary faculty, he saw that he could not hope to nourish it without a certain renunciation. He had no taste for becoming an expert or a connoisseur; he had not the slighest wish to instruct other people, or to arrive at a technical and professional knowledge of art. He was content to leave it to be a rare luxury, a thing which, when the opportunity and the mood harmonised, could open a door for him into a beautiful world of dreams. He was quite aware that he often liked what would be called

the wrong things; but what he was on the look-out for in art was not technical perfection or finished skill, but a certain indefinable poetical suggestion, which pictures could give him, when they came before him in certain moods. The mood, indeed, mattered more than the picture; moreover it was one of the strangest things about pictorial art, that the work of certain artists seemed able to convey poetical suggestion, even when the poetical quality seemed to be absent from their own souls. He knew a certain great artist well, who seemed to Hugh to be an essentially materialistic man, fond of sport and society, of money, and the pleasures that money could buy, who spoke of poetical emotion as moonshine, and seemed frankly bored by any attempt at the mystical apprehension of beautiful things, who could yet produce, by means of his mastery of the craft, pictures full of the tenderest and loveliest emotion and poetry. Hugh tried hard to discern this quality in the man's soul, tried to believe that it was there, and that it was deliberately disguised by a pose of bluff unaffectedness. But he came to the conclusion that it was not there, and that the painter achieved his results only by being able to represent with incredible fidelity the things in nature that held the poetical quality. On the other hand he had a friend of real poet-

ical genius, who was also an artist, but who could only produce the stiffest and hardest works of art, that had no quality about them except the quality of tiresome definiteness. This was a great mystery to Hugh; but it ended eventually, after a serious endeavour to appreciate what was approved by the general verdict to be of supreme artistic value, in making him resolve that he would just follow his own independent taste, and discern whatever quality of beauty he could, in such art as made an appeal to him. Thus he was not even an eclectic; he was a mere amateur; he treated art just as a possible vehicle of the poetical suggestion, and allowed it to speak to him when and where it could and would.

He had moreover a great suspicion of conventionality in taste. A man of accredited taste often seemed to him little more than a man who had the faculty of admiring what it was the fashion to admire. Hugh had been for a short time under the influence of Ruskin, and had tried sincerely to see the magnificence of Turner, and to loathe the artificiality of Claude Lorraine. But when he arrived at his more independent attitude, he found that there was much to admire in Claude; that exquisite golden atmosphere, suffusing a whole picture with an evening glow, enriching the lavish fore-

ground, and touching into romantic beauty headland after headland, that ran out, covered with delicate woodland, into the tranquil lake; those ruinous temples with a quiet flight of birds about them; the mysterious figures of men emerging from the woods on the edges of the water, bent serenely on some simple business, had the magical charm; and then those faint mountains closing the horizon, all rounded with the golden haze of evening, seemed to hold, in their faintly indicated heights and folds, a delicate peace, a calm repose, as though glad just to be, just to wait in that reposeful hour for the quiet blessing of waning light, the sober content so richly shed abroad. It was not criticism, Hugh thought, to say that it was all impossibly combined, falsely conceived. It was not, perhaps, a transcript of any one place or one hour; but it had an inner truth for all that; it had the spirit of evening with its pleasant weariness, its gentle recollection, its waiting for repose; or it had again the freshness of the morning, the vital hope that makes it delightful to rise, to cast off sleep, to go abroad, making light of the toil and heat that the day is to bring.

And then, in studying Turner, he learned to see that, lying intermingled with all the power and nobility of much of his work, there was a

displeasing extravagance, a violence, a faultiness of detail, an exaggeration that often ruined his pictures. Neither he nor Claude were true to life; but there was an insolence sometimes about Turner's variation from fact, which made him shudder. How he seemed sometimes, in his pictures of places familiar to Hugh—such, for instance, as the drawing of Malham Cove—to miss, by his heady violence, all the real, the essential charm of the place. Nature was not what Turner depicted it; and he did not even develop and heighten its beauty, but substituted for the real charm an almost grotesque personal mannerism. Turner's idea of nature seemed to Hugh often purely theatrical and melo-dramatic, wanting in restraint, in repose. The appeal of Turner seemed to him to be constantly an appeal to childish and unperceptive minds, that could not notice a thing unless it was forced upon them. Some of the earlier pictures indeed, such as that of the frost-bound lane, with the boy blowing on his fingers, and the horses nibbling at the stiff grass, with the cold light of the winter's dawn coming slowly up beyond the leafless hedge, seemed to him to be perfectly beautiful; but the Turner of the later period, the Turner so wildly upheld by Ruskin, seemed to Hugh to have lost sight of nature, in the pleasure of constructing extravagant and

fantastic schemes of colour. The true art seemed to Hugh not to be the art that trumpets beauty aloud, and that drags a spectator roughly to admire; but the art that waits quietly for the sincere nature-lover, and gives a soft hint to which the soul of the spectator can add its own emotion. To Hugh it was much a matter of mood. He would go to a gallery of ancient or modern art, and find that there many pictures had no message or voice for him; and then some inconspicuous picture would suddenly appeal to him with a mysterious force—the pathetic glance of childish eyes, or an old face worn by toil and transfigured by some inner light of hopefulness; or a woodland scene, tree-trunks rising amid a copse; or the dark water of a sea-cave, lapping, translucent and gem-like, round rock ledges; or a reedy pool, with the chimneys of an old house rising among the elms hard by; in a moment the mood would come upon him, and he would feel that a door had been opened for his spirit into a place of sweet imaginings, of wistful peace, bringing to him a hope of something that might assuredly be, some deep haven of God where the soul might float upon a golden tide. One day, for instance, two old line-engravings of Italian pictures which he had inherited, and which hung in his little library, gave him this sense; he had known them ever

since he was a child, and they had never spoken to him before. Had they hung all these years patiently waiting for that moment? One was *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, by Raphael, where the old bearded priest in his tiara, with his robes girt precisely about him, casts an inquiring look on the pair, as Joseph, a worn, majestic figure, puts the ring on the Virgin's finger. Some of it was hard and formal enough; the flowers on Joseph's rod might have been made of china; the slim figure of the disappointed suitor, breaking his staff, had an unpleasing trimness; and the companions of the Virgin were models of feeble serenity. But the great new octagonal temple in the background,—an empty place it seemed—for the open doors gave a glimpse of shadowy ranges—the shallow steps, the stone volutes, the low hills behind, with the towered villa—even the beggars begging of the richly dressed persons on the new-laid pavement—all these had a sudden appeal for him.

The other picture was the *Communion of Jerome*, by Domenichino — a stiff, conventional design enough. The cherubs hanging in air might have been made of wax or even metal—there was no aerial quality about them—they cumbered the place! But the wistful look of the old worn saint, kneeling so faintly, so

wearily, the pure lines of the shrine, the wax-lights, the stiff robes of the priest, the open arch showing an odd, clustered, castellated house, rising on its steep rocks among dark brushwood, with a glimmering pool below, and mysterious persons drawing near—it all had a tyrannical effect on Hugh's mind. Probably a conventional critic would have spoken approvingly of the Raphael and disdainfully enough of the Domenichino—but the point to Hugh was not in the art revealed, but in the association, the remoteness, the suggestiveness of the pictures. The faults of each were patent to him; but something in that moment shone through; one looked through a half-open door, and saw some beautiful mystery being celebrated within, something that one could not explain or analyse, but which was none the less certainly there.

Thus art became to Hugh, like nature, an echoing world that lay all about him, which could suddenly become all alive with constraining desire and joy. There was a scientific apprehension of both nature and art possible, no doubt. The very science that lay behind art had a suggestiveness of its own; that again had its own times for appeal. But Hugh felt that here again he must realise his limitations, and that life, to be real, must be a constant re-

sisting of diffuse wanderings in knowledge and perception. That his own medium was the medium of words, and that his task was to discern their colour and weight, their significance, whether alone or in combination; that he must be able to upraise the jointed fabric of thought, like a framework of slim rods of firm metal, not meant to be seen or even realised by the reader, but which, when draped with the rich tapestry of words, would lend shape and strong coherence to the whole. All other art must simply minister light and fragrance; it might be studied, indeed, but easily and superficially; not that it would not be better, perhaps, if he could have approached other arts with penetrating insight; but that he felt that for himself, with his limitations, his feebleness, his faltering grasp, nothing must come between him and his literary preoccupation. The other arts might feed his soul indeed, but he could not serve them. He found that he took great delight, and was always at ease, in the company of musicians and painters, because he could understand and interpret their point of view, their attitude of mind; while, on the other hand, he could approach them with the humility, the perceptive humility, which the artist desires as an atmosphere; he did not know enough about the technical points to controvert and differ,

while he knew enough to feel inspired by the tense feeling of secrets, understood and practised, which were yet hidden from ordinary eyes. Art, then, and music became for Hugh as a sweet and remote illustration of his own consecration—and indeed there were moments when, wearied by his own strenuous toil, ploughing sadly through the dreary sands of labour, that must close at intervals round the feet of the serious craftsman, the sight of a picture hanging perhaps in a room full of cheerful company, or the sound of music—a few bars rippling from an open window, or stealing in faint gusts from the buttressed window of a church lighted for even song—came to him like a sacred cup, carried in the hovering hands of a ministering angel, revealing to him the delicate hidden joy of beauty of which he had almost lost sight in his painful hurrying to some appointed end. *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra*, said the old motto of Cambridge. The light was clear enough, and led him forward, as it led the pilgrim of old, shining across a very wide field. But the holy refreshment that was tendered him upon the way, this was the blessed gift of those other arts which he dared not to follow, but which he knew held within themselves secrets as dear as the art which in his loneliness he pursued.

XXXV

HUGH had found himself one evening in the Combination-room of his college, in a little group of Dons who were discussing with great subtlety and ardour the question of retaining Greek in the entrance examinations of the university. It seemed to Hugh that the arguments employed must be identical with those that might formerly have been used to justify the retention of Hebrew in the curriculum —the advisability of making acquaintance at first hand with a noble literature, the mental discipline to be obtained; "Greek has such a noble grammar!" said one of these enthusiasts. Hugh grew a little nettled at the tone of the discussion. The defenders of Greek seemed to be so impervious to facts which told against them. They erected their theories, like umbrellas, over their heads, and experience pattered harmlessly on the top. Hugh advanced his own case as an instance of the failure, of the melancholy results of a classical curriculum. It was deplorable, he said, that he should have

realised, as he did when he left the university, that his real education had then to begin. He had found himself totally ignorant of modern languages and modern history, of science, and indeed of all the ideas with which the modern world was teeming. The chief defender of Greek told him blithely that he was indulging the utilitarian heresy; that the object of his education had been to harden and perfect his mind, so as to make it an instrument capable of subtle appreciation and ardent self-improvement. When Hugh pleaded the case of the immense numbers of boys who, after they had been similarly perfected and hardened, had been left, not only ignorant of what they had been supposed to be acquiring, but without the slightest interest in or appreciation of intellectual or artistic ideas at all, he was told that, bad as their case was, it would have been still worse if they had not been subjected to the refining process. Hugh, contrary to his wont, indulged in a somewhat vehement tirade against the neglect of the appreciative and artistic faculties in the case of the victims of a classical education. He maintained that the theory of mental discipline was a false one altogether, and that boys ought to be prepared on the one hand for practical life, and on the other initiated into mental culture. He com-

pared the mental condition of a robust English boy, his sturdy disbelief in intellectual things, with the case of a young Athenian, who was, if we could trust Plato, naturally and spontaneously interested in thoughts and ideas, sensitive to beautiful impressions, delicate, subtle, intelligent, and not less bodily active. He went on to carry the war into the enemy's country, and to attack the theory of mental discipline altogether, which he maintained was the same thing as to train agricultural labourers in high-jumping and sprinting, or like trying to put a razor-edge on a hoe. What he said was neglected altogether was the cultivation of artistic susceptibility. In nature, in art, in literature, he maintained, lay an immense possibility of refined and simple pleasure, which was never cultivated at all. The mental discipline, he argued, which average boys received, was doubly futile, because it neither equipped them for practical life nor opened to them any vista of intellectual or artistic pleasure. What he himself desired to do was, on the one hand, to equip boys for practical life, and on the other to initiate them into the possibilities of intellectual recreation. The ordinary boy, he thought, was turned out with a profound disbelief in intellectual things, and a no less profound belief in games as the only source of

rational pleasure. His own belief was that a great many English boys had the germs of simple artistic pleasures dormant in their spirits, and that they might be encouraged to believe in books, in art, in music, as sources of tranquil enjoyment, instead of regarding them as slightly unwholesome and affected tastes. He was aware that his views were being regarded as dangerously heterodox, and as tainted indeed with a kind of æsthetic languor. He felt that he was appearing to pose as the champion, not only of an unpopular cause, but of an essentially effeminate system. His opponents were certainly not effeminate; but they were masculine only in the sense in which the soldier is masculine, in his sturdy contempt for the arts of peace; whereas to Hugh the soldier was only an inevitable excrescence on the community, a disagreeable necessity which would disappear in the light of a rational and humane civilisation.

A young Don, a friend of Hugh's, who had taken part in the discussion, a few days after, in the course of a walk, attacked Hugh on the subject. Hugh was aware that he defended himself very indifferently at the time; but some remarks of his friend, who was a brisk and practical young man with a caustic wit, rankled in Hugh's mind. His friend had said

that the danger of Hugh's scheme was that it tended to produce people of the Maudle and Postlethwaite type, who made life into a mere pursuit of artistic impressions and sensations. "The fact is, Neville," he said, "that you upheld Epicureanism pure and simple; or, if you dislike the word because of its associations, you taught a mere Neo-Cyrenaicism. You may say that the kind of pleasure you defended is a refined and intellectual sort of pleasure, but for all that it tends to produce men who withdraw from practical life into a mild hedonism; you would develop a coterie of amiable, secluded persons, fastidious and delicate, indifferent citizens, individualistic and self-absorbed; the training of character retires into the background; and the meal that you press upon us is a meal of exquisite sauces, but without meat. Fortunately," his friend added, "the necessity of earning a living keeps most people from drifting into a life of this kind. It is only consistent with comfortable private means."

These phrases stuck in Hugh's memory with a painful insistence. He felt as if he had been rolled among thorns. He determined to think the matter carefully out. Was he himself drifting into a species of mystical hedonism? It was very far from his purpose to do that. He determined that he would prepare a little apologia

on the subject, to send to his friend; and this was what he eventually despatched:

"*Your conversation with me the other day gave me a good deal to think about. What you said practically amounted to a charge of hedonism. Of course much depends upon the way in which the word is applied, because I suppose that the large majority of men are hedonists, in the sense that they pursue as far as possible their own pleasure. But the particular kind of hedonism of which you spoke, Epicureanism, bears the sense of a certain degree of malingering. It implies that the person who pursues the course which I indicated is for some reason or other shirking his duty in the world. It is against this that I wish to defend myself; I would say in the first place that what I was recommending was a very different sort of thing. I was rather attacking a certain sheepishness of character which seems to me to be the danger of our present education. The practical ideal held up before boys at our public schools is that they should be virtuous and industrious; and that after they have satisfied both these claims, they should amuse themselves in what is held to be a manly way; they should fill their vacant hours with open-air exercise and talk about games; a little light reading is not objected to; but it is tacitly*

assumed that to be interested in ideas, in literature, art, and music is rather a dilettante business. I was reminded of a memorable conversation I once had with a man of some note, a great landowner and prominent politician. He was talking confidentially to me about his sons and their professions. One of the boys manifested a really remarkable artistic gift; he was a draughtsman of extraordinary skill, and I said something about his taking up art seriously. The great man said that it would never do. 'I consider it almost a misfortune,' he added, 'that the boy is so clever an artist, because it would be out of the question for him, in his position, to take up what is, after all, rather a disreputable profession. I have talked to him seriously about it, and I have said that there is no harm in his amusing himself in that way; but he must have a serious occupation.'

"That is a very fair instance of the way in which the pursuit of art is regarded among our solid classes—as distinctly a trade for an adventurer. It will be a long time before we alter that. But the truth is that this kind of conventionalism is what makes us so stupid a nation. We have no sort of taste for simplicity in life. A man who lived in a cottage, occupied in quiet and intellectual pursuits, would be held to be a failure, even if he lived in innocent happiness

to the age of eighty. My own firm belief is that this is all wrong. It opens up all sorts of obscure and bewildering questions as to why we are sent into the world at all; but my idea is that we are meant to be happy if we can, and that a great many people miss happiness, because they have not the courage to pursue it in their own way. I cannot believe myself that the complicated creature, so frail of frame, so limitless in dreams and hopes, is the result of a vortex. I cannot believe that we can be created except by a power that in a certain degree resembles ourselves. If we have remote dreams of love and liberty, of justice and truth, I believe that those ideas must exist in a sublime degree in the mind of our Maker. I believe, on the whole, though there are many difficulties in the way of the theory, that life is meant for most of us to be an educative process; that we are meant to quit the world wiser, nobler, more patient than we entered it; why the whole business is so intolerably slow, why we are so hampered by traditions and instincts that retard the process, I cannot conceive; but my belief is that we must as far as possible choose a course which leads us in the direction of the thoughts that we conceive to be noble and true. We may make mistakes, we may wander sadly from the way, but I believe that it is our duty, our best hope, to try and

perceive what it is that God is trying to teach us. Now, our choice must be to a great extent a matter of temperament. Some men like work, activity, influence, relations with others. Well, if they sincerely believe that they are meant to pursue these things, it is their duty to do so. Others, like myself, seem to be gifted with a sensitiveness of perception, and appreciation of beauty in many forms. I cannot believe that such an organisation is given me fortuitously, and that I am merely meant to suppress it. Of course the same argument could be used sophistically by a man with strong sensual passions and appetites, who could similarly urge that he must be intended to gratify them. But such gratification leads both to personal disaster and to the increase of unhappiness in the race. Such instincts as I recognise in myself seem to me to do neither. I believe that poets, artists, and musicians, to say nothing of religious teachers, have effected almost more for the welfare of the race than statesmen, patriots, and philanthropists. Of course the necessary work of the world has got to be done; but my own belief is that a good deal more than is necessary is done, because people pursue luxury rather than simplicity. I recognise to the full the duty of work; but, to be quite honest, I think that a serious man who will preach simplicity, disseminate ideas, suggest pos-

sibilities of intellectual and artistic pleasure, can do a very real work. Such a man must be disinterested; he must not desire fame or influence; he must be content if he can sow the seeds of beauty in a few minds.

"Now the Maudle and Postlethwaite school are not concerned with anything of the kind. They merely desire to make a sort of brightly polished mirror of their minds, capable of reflecting all sorts of beautiful effects, and this is an essentially effeminate thing to do, because it exalts the appreciation of sensation above all other aims; that is the pursuit of artistic luxury, and it is, as you say, quite inconsistent with good citizenship. I have no admiration for the citizenship the end of which is to make a comfortable corner for one's self at the expense of others; I do not at all believe that every man of ideals is bound to take a part in the administration of the community. We can easily have too many administrators; and that ends in the dismal slough of municipal politics. After all, we must nowadays all be specialists, and a man has as much right to specialise in beauty as he has to specialise in Greek Grammar. In fact a specialist in Greek Grammar has as his ultimate view the clearer and nicer appreciation of the shades of Greek expression, and is merely serving a high ideal of mental refinement. It

seems to me purely conventional to accept as valuable the work of a commentator on Sophocles, because it is traditionally respectable, and to say that a commentator on sunsets, as I once heard a poet described, is an effeminate dilettante. It is the motive that matters. Personally, I think that a man who has drifted into writing a commentary on Sophocles, because he happens to find that he can earn a living that way, is no more worthy of admiration than a man who earns his living by billiard-marking. Neither are necessary to the world. But the commentator and the billiard-marker are alike admirable, if they are working out a theory, if they think that thus and thus they can best help on the progress of the world.

"My own desire is, so to speak, to be a commentator on life, in one particular aspect. I think the world would be all the better if there were a finer appreciation of what is noble and beautiful, a deeper discrimination of motives, a larger speculation as to the methods and objects of our pilgrimage. I think the coarseness of the intellectual and spiritual palate that prevails widely nowadays is not only a misfortune, I think it is of the nature of sin. If people could live more in the generous visions of poets, if they could be taught to see beauty in trees and fields and buildings, I think they would be happier and

better. Most people are obliged to spend the solid hours of the day in necessary work. The more sordid that work is, the more advisable it is to cultivate a perception of the quality of things. Every one has hours of recreation in every day; the more such hours are filled with pleasant, simple, hopeful, beautiful thoughts, the better for us all.

"Of course I may be quite wrong; I may be meant to find out my mistake; but I seem to discern in the teaching of Christ a desire to make men see the true values of life, to appreciate what is beautiful and tender in simple lives and homely relationships. The teaching of Christ seems to me to be uniquely and essentially poetical, and to point to the fact that the uplifting of the human heart in admiration, hope, and love, is the cure for some, at least, of our manifold ills. That is my own theory of life, and I do not see that it is effeminate, or even unpractical; and it is a mere caricature of it to call it Epicurean. What does complicate life is the feeble acceptance of conventional views, the doing of things, not because one hopes for happiness out of them, not even because one likes them, but because one sees other people doing them. Even in the most sheltered existence, like my own, there are plenty of things which provide a bracing tonic against self-satisfaction. There

are the criticism and disapproval of others, contempt, hostility ; there are illness, and sorrow, and the fear of death. No one of a sensitive nature can hope to live an untroubled life ; but to court unhappiness for the sake of its tonic qualities seems to me no more reasonable than to refuse an anæsthetic on the ground that it is interfering with natural processes.

"I don't know that I expect to convert you ; but at least I am glad to make my position clear. I don't assume that I am in the right. I only know that I am trying to do what appears to me to be right, trying to simplify the issues of life, to unravel the tangle in which so many people seem to me to acquiesce helplessly and timidly."

XXXVI

THERE were days, of course, when Hugh's reflections took an irrepressibly optimistic turn. Such was a bright day in the late summer, when the sun shone with a temperate clearness, and big white clouds, like fragments torn from some ærial pack of cotton-wool, moved blithely in the sky. Hugh rode—he was staying at his mother's house—to a little village perched astride on a great ridge. He diverged from the road to visit the ancient church, built of massive stone and roofed with big stone-tiles; up there, swept by strong winds, splashed by fierce rains, it has grown to look like a crag rather than a building. By the side of it ran a little, steep, narrow lane, which he had never explored; he rode cautiously down the stony track, among thick hazel copses; occasionally, through a gap, he had a view of a great valley, all wild with wood; once or twice he passed a timbered farmhouse, with tall brick chimneys. The country round about was much invaded by new pert houses, but there were none here; and

Hugh supposed that this road, which seemed the only track into the valley, was of so forbidding a steepness that it had not occurred to any one to settle there. The road became more and more precipitous, and at the very bottom, having descended nearly three hundred feet, Hugh found himself in a very beautiful place. He thought he had never seen anything more sweetly, more characteristically English. On one side was a rough field, encircled by forest on all sides; here stood some old wooden sheds and byres; and one or two green rides passed glimmering into the thick copse, with a charming air of mystery, as though they led to some sequestered woodland paradise. To the right was a mill, with a great pond thick with bulrushes and water-lilies, full of water-birds, coots, and moor-hens, which swam about, uttering plaintive cries. The mill was of wood, the planks warped and weather-stained, the tiled roof covered with mosses; the mill-house itself was a quaint brick building, with a pretty garden, full of old-fashioned flowers, sloping down to the pool; a big flight of pigeons circled round and round in the breeze, turning with a sudden clatter of wings; behind the house were small sand-stone bluffs, fringed with feathery ashes, and the wood ran up steeply above into the sky. It looked like an old steel-

engraving, like a picture by Morland or Constable. The blue smoke went up from the chimneys in that sheltered nook, rising straight into the air, lending a rich colour to the trees behind. Hugh thought it would be a beautiful place to live in, so remote from the world, in that still valley, where the only sound was the wind of the copses, the trickle of the mill-leat, and the slow thunder of the dripping wheel within. Yet he supposed that the simple people who lived there were probably unconscious of its beauty, and only aware that the roads which led to the spot were inconveniently steep. Still, it was hard to think that the charm of the place would not pass insensibly into the hearts, perhaps even into the faces, of the dwellers there.

He stood for a little to see the bright water leaping clear and fresh from the sluice. There was a delicious scent of cool river-plants everywhere. It was hard not to think that the stream, bickering out in the sun from the still pool, had a sense of joy and delight. It was passing, passing; Hugh could trace in thought every mile of the way; down the wooded valley it was bound, running over the brown gravel, by shady wood-ends and pasture sides; then it would pass out into the plain, and run, a full and brimming stream, between sandy banks,

half hidden by the thick, glossy-leaved alders. Hugh knew the broad water-meadows down below, with the low hills on either side, where big water-plants grew in marshy places, and where the cattle moved slowly about through the still hours. Soon the stream would be running by the great downs—it was a river now, bearing boats upon it—till it passed by the wharves and beneath the bridges of the little town, and out into the great sea-flat, meeting, with how strange a wonder, the upward-creeping briny tide, with its sharp savours and its wholesome smell; till it flowed at last by the docks, where the big steamers lay unlading, blowing their loud sea-horns, past weed-fringed piers and shingly beaches, until it was mingled with the moving deep, where the waves ran higher on the blue sea-line, and the great buoy rolled and dipped above the shoal.

And then, perhaps, it would be drawn up again in twisted wreaths of mist, rising in vapour beneath the breathless sun, to flock back, perhaps, in clouds over the earth, and begin its little pilgrimage again.

Was the same true, he wondered, of himself, of everything about him? Was it all a never-ending, and unwearying pilgrimage? Was death itself but the merging of the atom in the element, and then, perhaps, the race began

again? On such a day as this, of bright sun and eager air. it seemed sweet to think that it was even so. This soul-stuff, that one called one's self, wafted out of the unknown, strangely entangled with the bodily elements, would it perhaps mingle again with earthly conditions, borne round and round in an endless progression? Yet, if this was so, why did one seem, not part of the world, but a thing so wholly distinct and individual? To-day, indeed, Hugh seemed to be akin to the earth, and felt as though all that breathed or moved and lived had a brotherly, a sisterly greeting for him. As he moved slowly on up the steep road, a child playing by the wayside, encouraged perhaps by a loving brightness that rose from Hugh's heart into his face, nodded and smiled to him shyly. Hugh smiled back, and waved his hand. That childish smile came to him as a confirmation of his blithe mood; there were others, then, bound on the same pilgrimage as himself, who wished him well, and shared his happiness. To pass thus smiling through the world, heedless as far as might be of weariness and sorrow, taking the simple joys that flowed so freely, if only one divested one's self of the hard and dull ambitions that made life into a struggle and a contest—that was, perhaps, the secret! There would be days, no doubt, of gloom and

heaviness; days when life would run, like the stream which he could hear murmuring below him, through dark coverts, dripping with rain; days of frost, when nature was leafless and benumbed, and when the rut was barred with icy spikes. But one could live in hope and faith, waiting for the summer days, when life ran swift and bright, under a pale sunset sky till the streaks of crimson light died into a transparent green; and the stream ran joyfully, under the stars, wondering what sweet unfamiliar place might stand revealed, when the day climbed slowly in the east, and the dew globed itself upon the fresh grass, in the invigorating sweetness, the cool fragrance of the dawn.

XXXVII

ONE hot cloudless day of summer, Hugh took a train, and, descending at a quiet wayside station, walked to a little place deep in the country, to see the remains of an ancient house which he was told had a great beauty. He found the place with some difficulty. The church, to which he first directed his steps, was very ancient and almost ruinous. It was evidently far too big for the needs of the little hamlet, and it was so poorly endowed that it was difficult to find any one who would take the living. A great avenue of chestnuts, with a grass-grown walk beneath, led up to the porch. He entered by a curious iron-bound door, under a Norman arch of very quaint workmanship. The church was of different dates, and the very neglect which it suffered gave it an extreme picturesqueness. One of its fine features was a brick chapel, built at the east end of one of the aisles, where an old baron lay in state, in black armour, his eyes closed quietly, his pointed beard on his breast, his hands folded, as though

he lay praying to himself. The heavy marble pillars of the shrine were carved with a stiff ornament of vine-leaves and grape-clusters, and the canopy rose pompously to the roof, with its cognisances and devices. There were many monuments in the church, on which Hugh read the history of the ancient family, now engulfed in a family more wealthy and ancient still; the latest of the memorials was that of a lady, whose head, sculptured by Chantrey, with its odd puffs of hair, had a discreet and smiling mien, as of one who had known enough sorrow to purge prosperity of its grossness. From the churchyard there led a little path, which skirted a wide moat of dark water, full of innumerable fish, basking in the warmth; in the centre of the moat stood a dark grove of trees, with a thick undergrowth. Suddenly, through an opening, Hugh saw the turrets of an ancient gatehouse, built of mellow brick, rising into the sunlight, with an astonishing sweetness and nobleness of air; below was a lawn, bordered by yew-hedges, where a party of people, ladies in bright dresses and leisurely men, were sitting talking with a look of smiling content. It was more like a scene in a romance than a thing in real life. Hugh stood unobserved beneath a tree, and looked long at the delightful picture; and then presently wandered further by a grassy lane,

with high hedges full of wild roses and elder-blooms, where the air had a hot, honied perfume. He came in a moment to a great clear stream running silently between banks full of meadow-sweet and loosestrife. The turrets of the gate-house looked pleasantly over the trees of the little park that lay on the other side of the stream. The air was still but fresh. The trees stood silent, with the metallic look of high summer upon their stiff leaves, as though seen in a picture. The whole landscape seemed to have a consecration of quiet joy and peace over it. It seemed a place made for the walks of rustic lovers, on summer evenings, under a low-hung moon. The whole scene, the homely bridge, the murmur of the water in the pool, the blossoming hedges, had a sense of delicate romance about it. It seemed to stand for so much happiness, and to draw Hugh into the charmed circle.

The difficulty was somehow to believe that the place was in reality a centre of real and ordinary life; it seemed almost impossibly beautiful and delicious to Hugh, like a play enacted for his sole benefit, a sweet tale told. Those gracious persons in the garden seemed like people in a scene out of Boccaccio, whose past and whose future are alike veiled and unknown and who just emerge, in the light of art,

as a sweet company seen for an instant, and yet somehow eternally there. But the thought that they were persons like himself, with cares, schemes, anxieties, appeared inconceivable; that was one of the curious illusions of life, that the world through which one moved seemed to group itself for one's delight into a pleasant vision, which had no concern for one's self except to brighten and enhance the warm sunlit day with an indescribable grace and beauty. How hard to think that it was all changing and shifting, even while one gazed! that the clear water, lapsing through the sluice, was passing onwards, and could never again be at that one sweet point of its seaward course; that the roses were fading and dying beside him; that the pleasant group on the lawn must soon break up, never perhaps to reassemble. If one could but arrest the quiet flow of things for a moment, suspend it for a period, however brief! That was after all the joy of art, that it caught such a moment as that, while the smiling faces turned to each other, while the sun lay warm on the brickwork, and made it immortal!

There came into Hugh's mind the thought that this deep thirst for peace might somehow yet be satisfied. How could he otherwise conceive of it, how could he dream so clearly of it, if it were not actually there? He thought that

there must be a region where the pulse of time should cease to beat, where there should be no restless looking backwards and forwards, but where the spirit should brood in an unending joy; but now, the world thrust one forward, impatient, unsatisfied; even as he gazed, the shadows had shifted and lengthened, and the thought of the world, that called him back to care and anxiety, began to overshadow him. Was it a phantom that mocked him? or was it not rather a type, an allegory of something unchanged and unchangeable, that waited for him beyond? And then in that still afternoon, there came to him a sense that occasionally visited him, and that seemed, when it came, the truest and best thing in the world, the vision of an unseen Friend, to Whom he was infinitely dear, closer to Him even than to himself, Who surrounded and enveloped him with care and concern and love; Who brought him tenderly into the fair green places of the earth, such as he had visited to-day, whispered to him the secret of it all, and only did not reveal it in its fulness because the time for him to know it was not yet, and because the very delay arose from some depth of unimaginable, love. In such a mood as this, Hugh felt that he could wait in utter confidence; that he could drink

in with glad eyes and ears the beautiful and delicate things that were shown to him, the rich, luxuriant foliage, the dim sun-warmed stream, the silent trees, the old towers. There seemed to him nothing that he could not bear, nothing that he could not gladly do, when so tender a hand was leading him. He knew indeed that he would again be impatient, restless, wilful; but for the moment it was as though he had tasted of some mysterious sacrament; that the wine of some holy cup had been put to his lips; that he knew that he was not alone, but in the very heart of a wise and patient God.

XXXVIII

It was in the later weeks of a hot, still midsummer that Hugh escaped from Cambridge to the Lakes. He did not realise, until he found himself driving in the cool of the evening beside Windermere, how parched and dry his very mind had become in the long heats of the sun-dried flats. Sometimes the road wound down to the very edge of the water, lapping deliciously among the stones; sometimes it skirted the pleasances of a cool sheltered villa which lay embowered in trees, blinking contentedly across the lake. The sight of the great green hills with their skirts clothed with wood, with trees straggling upwards along the water-courses, the miniature crags escaping from oak-coppices, the black heads of bleak mountains, filled him with an exquisite and speechless delight.

It was sunset before he reached his destination, which was a large house of rough stone, much festooned with creepers, which crowned a little height at the base of the fells, in the centre of a wild wood. The house was that of a very old man, hard on his ninetieth year, a

relative of Hugh's, and an old friend of his family. There was a short cut to the house among the woods, and Hugh left the carriage to go round by the drive, while he himself walked up. The path was a little track among copses, roofed over by interlacing boughs, and giving an abundance of pretty glimpses to right and left of the unvisited places of the wood; old brown boulders covered with moss, with ash-suckers shooting out among the stones, little streams rippling downwards, small green lawns fringed with low trees. The western valley was full of a rich golden light, and the wooded ridges rose quietly one after another, with the dark solemn form of mountains on the horizon. A few dappled clouds, fringed with fire, floated high in the green sky. It all seemed to him to be screening some sacred and mysterious pageant, which was, as it were, being celebrated out in the west, where the orange sunset lay dying. He thought of the lonely valleys among the hills, slowing filling with twilight gloom, the high ridges from which one could discern the sun sinking in glory over the far-spread flashing sea with its misty rim. The house loomed up suddenly over the thickets, with a light or two burning in the windows which pierced the thick wall.

Within, all was as it had been for many a year;

it was a house in which everything seemed to stand still, the day passing smoothly in a simple and pleasant routine. He received a very kindly and gentle welcome from his host, and was pleased to find that the party was of the quietest—an old friend or two, a widowed daughter of the house, one or two youthful cousins. Hugh slipped into his place in the household as if he had never been absent; he established his books in a corner of the dark library ful of old volumes. It was always a pleasure to him to see his host, a courtly, silent old man, with snow-white hair and beard, who sat smiling, eating so little that Hugh wondered how he sustained life, reading for an hour or two, walking a little about the garden, sitting long in contented meditation, never seeming to be weary or melancholy. Hugh remembered that, some years before, he had wondered that any one could live so, neither looking backwards nor forwards, with no designs or cares or purposes, simply taking each day as it came with a perfect tranquillity, not overshadowed by the thought of how few years of life were left him. But now he seemed to understand it better; it was just the soft close of a kindly and innocent life, dying like a tree or a flower. The old man liked to have Hugh as the companion of his morning ramble, showed him

many curious plants and flowers, and spoke often of the reminiscences of his departed youth with no shadow of desire or regret. At first the grateful coolness of the place revived Hugh; but the soft, moist climate brought with it a fatigue of its own, an indolent dejection, which made him averse to work and even to bodily activity. He took, however, one or two lonely walks among the mountains. In his listless mood, he was vexed and disquieted by the contrast between the utter peace and beauty of the hills, which seemed to uplift themselves, half in majesty and half in appeal, into the still sky, as though they had struggled out of the world, and yet desired a further blessing,—the contrast between their meek and rugged patience and the noisy, dusty crowd of shameless and indifferent tourists, that circulated among the green valleys, like a poisonous fluid in the veins of the wholesome mountains. They brought a kind of a blight upon the place; and yet they were harmless, inquisitive people, tempted thither, most of them by fashion, a few perhaps by a feeble love of beauty, and only desirous to bring their own standard of comforts with them. The world seemed out of joint; the radical ugliness and baseness of man an insult to the purity and sweetness of nature.

Hugh walked back, in a close and heavy afternoon, across the fell, with these thoughts struggling together in his heart. The valley was breathlessly still, and the flies buzzed round him as he disturbed them from the bracken. The whole world looked so sweet and noble, that it was impossible not to think that it was moulded and designed by a Will of unutterable graciousness and beauty. From the top, beside a little crag full of clinging trees, that held on tenaciously to the crevices and ledges, with so perfect an accommodation to their precarious situation, Hugh surveyed the wide valleys, and saw the smoke ascend from hamlets and houses, the lake as still as a mirror, while the shadows lengthened on the hills, which seemed indeed to change their very shapes by delicate gradations. It looked perfectly peaceful and serene. Yet in how many houses were there unquiet and suffering hearts, waiting in vain for respite or release! The pain of the world pressed heavily upon Hugh; it seemed that if he could have breathed out his life there upon the hill-top among the fern, to mingle with the incense of the evening, that would be best; and yet even while he thought it, there seemed to contend with his sadness an immense desire for joy, for life; how many beautiful things there were to see, to hear, to feel, to say; to be loved, to be

needed—how Hugh craved for that! While he sat, there alighted on his knee, with much deliberation, a dry, varnished-looking, orange-banded fly, which might have almost been turned out of a manufactory a moment before. It sent out a thin and musical buzzing, as it cleaned its brown large-eyed head industriously with its long legs. It seemed to wish to sit with Hugh; and again and again, after a short flight, it returned to the same place. What was the meaning of this tiny, definite life, with its short space of sun and shade, made with so curious and elaborate an art, so whimsically adorned and glorified? Here again he was touched close by the impenetrable mystery of things. But presently the cheerful and complacent creature flew off on some secret errand, and Hugh was left alone again.

He descended swiftly into the valley; the road was full of dust. The vehicles, full of chattering, smoking, vacuous persons were speeding home. The hands of many were full of poor fading flowers, torn from lawn and ledge to please a momentary whim. Yet beside the road slid the clear stream over its shingle, passing from brisk cascades into dark and silent pools, fringed with rich water-plants, the trees bowing over the water. How swiftly one passed from disgust and ugliness into unimag-

ined peace! It was all going forwards, all changing, all tending to some unknown goal.

Hugh found his host sitting on the terrace, under a leafy sycamore, a perfect picture of holy age and serenity. He listened to the recital of Hugh's little adventures with a smile, and said that he had often walked over the fell in the old days, but did not suppose he would ever see it again. "I am just waiting for my release," he said, with a little nod of his head; "every time that I sit here, I think it may very likely be the last." Hugh longed to ask him the secret of this contented and passionless peace, but he knew there could be no answer; it was the kindly gift of God.

The sunset died away among the blue hill-ranges, and a soft breeze began to stir among the leaves of the sycamore overhead. A night-jar sent out its liquid, reiterated note from the heather, and a star climbed above the edge of the dark hill. Here was peace enough, if he could but reach it and seize it. Yet it softly eluded his grasp, and seemed only to mock him as unattainable. Should he ever seize it? There was no answer possible; yet a message seemed to come wistfully and timidly, flying like a night-bird out of the wild woodland, as though it would have settled near him, but it left him with the same inextinguishable hunger

of the heart, that seemed to be increased rather than fed by the fragrant incense of the garden, the sight of the cool, glimmering paths, the pale rock rising from the turf, the silent pool.

XXXIX

HUGH was staying in the country with his mother. It was a bright morning in the late summer, and he had just walked out on to the little gravel-sweep before the house, which commanded a view of a pleasant wooded valley with a stream running through; it was one of those fresh days, with a light breeze rustling the trees, when it seemed good to be alive; rain had fallen in the night, and had washed the dust of a long drought off the trees; some soft aërial pigment seemed mingled with the air, lending a rich lustre to everything; the small woods on the hillside opposite had a mellow colour, and the pastures between were of radiant and transparent freshness; the little gusts whirled over the woodland, turning the under sides of the leaves up, and brightening the whole with a dash of lighter green.

Just at this moment a telegram was put into Hugh's hand, announcing the sudden death of an elderly lady, who had been a good friend to him for over twenty years. Death seemed to

be everywhere about him, and the bright scene suddenly assumed an almost heartless aspect of mirth; but he put the thought from him, and strove rather to feel that life and death rejoice together.

Later in the day he heard more particulars. His friend was a wealthy woman who had lived a very quiet life for many years in a pleasant country-house. She had often spoken to Hugh of her fear of a long and tedious illness, wearing alike to both the sufferer and those in attendance, when the mind may become fretful, fearful, and impatient in the last scene, just when one most desires that the latest memories of one's life may be cheerful, brave, and serene. Her prayer had been very tenderly answered; she had been ailing of late; but she had been sitting talking in her drawing-room the day before, to a quiet family group, when she had been seized with a sudden faintness, and had died gently, in a few minutes, smiling palely, and probably not even knowing that she was in any sort of danger.

Hugh spent the day mostly in solitude, and retraced in tender thought the stages of their long friendship. His friend had been a woman of strong and marked individuality, who had loved life, and had made many loyal friends. She was intensely, almost morbidly, aware of

the suffering of the world, especially of animals; and Hugh remembered how she had once told him that a shooting-party in the neighbouring squire's woods had generally meant for her a sleepless night, at the thought of wounded birds and beasts suffering and bleeding the long hours through, couched in the fern, faint with pain, and wondering patiently what hard thing had befallen them. She had been a woman of strong preferences and prejudices, marked likes and dislikes; intensely critical of others, even of those she loved best. Her talk was lively, epigrammatic, and pungent; she was the daughter of a famous Whig house, and had the strong aristocratical prejudices, coupled with a theoretical belief in popular equality, so often found in old Whig families. But this superiority betrayed itself not in any obvious arrogance or disdain, but in a high and distinguished personal courtesy, that penetrated as if by a subtle aroma all that she said or did. Though careless of personal appearance, with no grace of beauty, and wearing habitually the oldest clothes, she was yet indisputably the first person in any society in which she found herself. She was intensely reserved about herself, her family, her possessions, and her past; but Hugh had an inkling that there had been some deep disappointment in the

background, which had turned a passionately affectionate nature into a fastidious and critical temperament. She had a wonderful contralto voice, and a real genius for music; she could rarely be persuaded to touch an instrument; but occasionally, with a small and familiar party, she would sing a few old songs with a passion and a depth of melancholy feeling that produced an almost physical thrill in her audiences. She was of an indolent temperament, read little, never worked, had few philanthropic or social instincts; she was always ready to talk, but was equally content to spend long afternoons sitting alone before a fire, just shielding her eyes from the blaze, meditating with an intentness that seemed as though she were revolving over and over again some particular memory, some old and sad problem for which she could find no solution. Hugh used to think that she blamed herself for something irreparable.

But her gift of humour, of incisive penetration, of serious enthusiasm, made it always refreshing to be with her; and Hugh found himself reflecting that though it had been in many ways so inarticulate and inactive a life, it yet seemed, by virtue of a certain vivid quality, a certain subdued fire, a life of imperishable worth. She had been both generous and severe in her

judgments; but there had never been anything tame or mild or weak about her. She had always known her own mind; she yielded freely to impulse without ever expressing regret or repentance. Small as her circle had been, Hugh yet felt that she had somehow affected the world; and yet he could indicate nothing that she had accomplished, except for the fact that she had been a kind of bracing influence in the lives of all who had come near her.

Her last message to him had been an intensely sympathetic letter of outspoken encouragement. She had heard that a severe judgment had been passed upon Hugh's writings by a common friend. She knew that this had been repeated to Hugh, and judged rightly that it had hurt and wounded him. Her letter was to the effect that the judgment was entirely baseless, and that he was to pursue the line he had taken up without any attempt to deviate from it. It went to Hugh's heart that he had made little effort of late, owing to circumstances and pressure of work, to see her; but he knew that she was aware of his affection, and he had never doubted hers. He felt, too, that if there had been anything to forgive, any shadow of dissatisfaction, it was forgiven in that moment. Her death seemed somehow to Hugh to be the strongest proof he had ever

received of the permanent identity of the soul; it was impossible to think of her as not there; equally impossible was it to think of her as wrapped in sleep, or even transformed to a heavenly meekness; he could think of her, with perhaps an added brightness of demeanour, at the knowledge of how easy a thing after all had been the passage she had feared, with the dark eyes that he knew so well, like wells of fire in the pale face, smiling almost disdainfully at the thought that others should grieve for her; she was one whom it was impossible ever to compassionate, and Hugh could not compassionate her now. She would have had no sort of tolerance for any melancholy or brooding grief; she would desire to be tenderly remembered, but she would have been utterly impatient of the thought that any grief for her should weaken or darken the outlook of her friends upon the world. Hugh resolved, with a great flood of strong love for his friend, that he would grieve for her as she would have had him grieve, as though they were but separated for a little.

She had left, he learned, the most decisive direction that no one should be summoned to her funeral: that was so like her brave, sensible nature; she desired the grief for her to be wholesome and temperate grief, with no lingering over the sad accidents of mortality. Hugh felt

the strong bond of friendship, that had existed between them, grow and blossom into a vigorous and enduring love. She seemed close beside him all that day, approving his efforts after a joyful tranquillity. He could almost see her, if he sank for a moment into a tearful sorsow, casting upward that impatient look he knew so well, if any instance of human weakness were related in her presence.

And thus the death of his old friend seemed, as the day drew on, to have brought a strange brightness into his life, by making the dark less terrible, the unknown more familiar. She was there, with the same brave courtesy, the same wholesome scorn, the same humorous decisiveness; and though the thought of the gap came like an ache into his mind, again and again, he resolved that he would not yield to ineffectual sadness; but that he would be worthy of the friendship which she had given him, not easily, he remembered, but after long testing and weighing his character; and that he would be faithful—he prayed that he might be that—to so pure and generous a gift.

XL

In Hugh's temperament, sensitive and eager as it was, there was a strong tendency to live in the future and in the past rather than in the present. In the past, he realised, he could live without dismay and without languor, because the mind has so extraordinary a power of sifting its memories, of throwing away and disregarding all that is sordid, ugly, and base, and retaining only the finest gold. But there was a danger of dwelling two much upon the future, because the anxious mind, fertile in imagination, was so apt to weave for itself pictures of discouragement and failure, sad dilemmas, dreary dishonours, calamities, shadows, woes. How often had the thought of what might be in store clouded the pure sunshine of some bright day of summer; how often had the thought of isolation, of loss, of bereavement, hung like a cloud between himself and his intercourse even with those whom he most feared to lose! He thought sometimes of that sad and yet bracing sentiment, uttered by one whose life had been

filled with every delight that wealth, guided by cultivated taste, could purchase. "My life," said this wearied man, "has been clouded by troubles, most of which never happened." But even apart from the sorrows which he knew might or might not befall him, there was one darkest shadow, the shadow of death, the cessation of beloved energies, of delightful prospects, of the sweet interchange of friendship, of the bright and brave things of life. Could one, he asked himself, ever come to regard death as a natural, a beautiful thing, a delicious resting from life, an appointed goal? It was the one thing certain and inevitable, the last terror, the final silence, which it seemed nothing could break.

The thought came to him with a deep insistence on a day when the funeral services for a great personage, called away without a single warning, were held in the chapel of his own college. There was a great gathering of friends and residents. The long procession, blackrobed and bareheaded, with the chilly winter sun shining down on the court, wound slowly through the college buildings, with many halts, and at last entered the great chapel, the organ playing softly a melody of pathetic grief, in which the sad revolt of human hearts that had loved life and the warm, kind world, made

itself heard. They passed to their places, and then very slowly and heavily the sad and helpless burden, the coffin, veiled and palled, freighted with the rich scents of the dying flowers that lay in stainless purity upon it, was borne to its place. The life of their brother had been a very useful, happy, and innocent life, full of quiet energies, of simple activities, of refined pleasures. There seemed no need for its suspension. The very suddenness of the summons had been a beautiful and kindly thing, attended by no fears and little suffering—but kindly, only upon the supposition that it was necessary. The holy service proceeded, the voice of old human sorrow, of tender hope, of ardent faith, thrilling through the mournful words. It was well, no doubt, as acquiescence was inevitable, to acquiesce as patiently, even as eagerly as possible. But there were two alternatives: one that the beloved life had gone out utterly, as an expiring flame; if so was it not well to know it, so that one might frame one's life upon that sad knowledge? yet the heart could not bear to think it; and then Faith seemed to step in, dimly smiling, finger on lip, and pointing upwards. If that smile, that pointing hand, meant anything, why could there not be sent some hint of cer-

tainty that the sweet, fragrant life that was over, so knit up with love and friendship and regard, had a further, a serener future awaiting it? The question was, did such a scene as was then enacted hold any real and vital message of hope for the soul; or was it a thing to turn the back upon, to forget, to banish, as merely casting a shadow upon the joyful energies of life?

It seemed to Hugh, when the sad rites were done, and he was left alone, that there was but one solution possible—the thought shaped itself dimly and wistfully out of the dark—that there was one element that was out of place, one element over which the mind had a certain power, that one must resolve to exorcise and cast out—the element of fear. And yet fear, that unmanning, abominable thing, that struck the light out of life, that made one incapable of energy and activity alike, was that, too, not a dark gift from the Father's hand? Had it a purifying, a restoring influence? It seemed to Hugh that it had none. Yet why was it made so terribly easy, so insupportably natural, if it had not its place in the great economy of God? Was not this the darkest of dark dilemmas? Slowly reflecting on it, Hugh seemed to see that fear had one effect of good about it; it was one of those things, and alas they were many, that seemed

strewn about us only that we might learn to triumph over them. For one who really believed in the absolutely infinite and all-embracing will of God, there was no room for fear at all. If the things of life were sent wisely, tenderly, and graciously, not care, not suffering, not even death admitted of any questioning; and yet fear seemed a deeper, more instinctive thing than reasoning itself. The very fear of non-existence, in the light of reason, seemed a wholly unreal thing. No shadow of it attached to the long dark years of the world, which had passed before one's own conscious life began. One could look back in the pages of history to the ancient pageant of the world in which one had no part, and not feel one's self wronged or misused in having had no share in those vivid things. Why should we regard a past in which we had had no conscious part with such a blithe serenity, and yet look forward to that future in which, for all we knew, we could have no part either, with such an envious despair? The thought was unreasonable enough, but it was there. But it was possible, by thus boldly and tranquilly confronting the problem, to diminish the pressure of the shadow. A man could throw himself, could he not, in utter confidence before the feet of God, claiming nothing, demanding nothing but the sense of perfect

acquiescence in His will and deed? The secret again was, not to forecast and forebode, but to live in the day and for the day, practising labour, kindliness, gentleness, peace. That was a true image, the image of those old pilgrims who gathered the manna for their daily use; little or much, it sufficed; and no one might, through indolence or prudence, evade the daily labour by laying up a store; the store vanished in corruption. So it was with all ambitious dreams, all attempts to lay a jealous hand on what might be; it was that which poisoned life. Those far-reaching plans, those hopes of ease and glory, that wealth laid up for many years, they were the very substance of decay. Even fear itself must be accepted, when it was wholesomely and inevitably there; but not amplified, added to, dwelt upon. How rarely was one in doubt about the next, the immediate duty. And one could surely win, by patient practice, by resolute effort, the power of casting out of the moment the shadow of the uneasy days ahead. How simple, how brief those very uneasinesses turned out to be! Things were never as bad as one feared, ever easier than one had hoped. It was a false prudence, a foolish calculation, to think that by picturing the terrors of a crisis one made it easier when it came; just as one so sadly discounted joys by anticipation

and found them hollow, disappointing husks when they lay open in the hand.

Hugh rose from his thoughts and walked to the window. The day was dying, robed in a solemn pomp. The fields were shrouded in mist but the cloud-rims in the west were touched with intense edges of gold; Hugh thought of the little churchyard that lay beyond those trees, where, under the raw mould heaped up so mutely, under the old wall, beside the yew-tree, in the shadow of the chancel-gable, lay the perishing vesture of the spirit of his friend, banished from light and warmth to his last cold house. How lonely, how desolate it seemed; and the mourners, too, sitting in the dreary rooms, with the agony of the gap upon them, the empty chair, the silent voice, the folded papers, the closed books! How could God atone for all that, even though He made all things new? It was not what was new, but what was old, for which one craved; that long perspective of summer mornings, of pacings to and fro, of happy work, of firelit evenings, of talk, of laughter, the groups breaking up and reforming—how little one had guessed and valued the joy, the content, the blessing of them at the time! In the midst of them, one was reaching forwards, restlessly and vainly, to the future that was to be richer yet. Then the future

became the happy present, and still one had leaned forward. How idle it was! even while he waited and gazed, the light of evening was gone, the clouds were lustreless and wan, the sunset, that band of golden light, was flying softly, a girdle of beauty round the world; but the twilight and the night had their beauty, too, their peace, their refreshment, their calm.

XLI

It must not be thought that because this little book attempts to trace the more secret and solitary thoughts of Hugh, as his soul took shape under the silent influences of pensive reflection, that the current of his life was all passed in lonely speculation. He had a definite place in the world, and mixed with his fellow-men, with no avoidance of the little cares of daily life. He only tended, as solitude became more dear to him, and as the thoughts that he loved best rose more swiftly and vividly about him, to frame his life, as far as he could, upon simple and unambitious lines.

In this he acted according to the dictates of a kind of intuition. It was useless, he felt, to analyse motives; it was impossible to discover how much was disinterestedness, how much unworldliness, how much the pursuit of truth, how much the avoidance of anxious responsibility, how much pure indolence. He was quite ready to believe that a certain amount of the latter came in, though Hugh was not indolent in

the ordinary sense of the word. He was incapable of pure idling; but he was also incapable of carrying out prolonged and patient labour, unless he was keenly interested in an object; and the fact that he found the renunciation of ambitions so easy and simple a thing was a sufficient proof to him that his interest in mundane things was not very vital. But Hugh above all things desired to have no illusions about himself; and he was saved from personal vanity not so much by humility of nature as from a deep sense of the utter dependence of all created things on their Creator. He did not look upon his own powers, his own good qualities, as redounding in any way to his credit, but as the gift of God. He never fell into the error of imagining himself to have achieved anything by his own ability or originality, but only as the outcome of a desire implanted in him by God, who had also furnished him with the requisite perseverance to carry them out. He could not lay his finger on any single quality, and say that he had of his own effort improved it. And, in studying the lives and temperaments of others, he did not think of their achievements as things which they had accomplished; but rather as a sign of the fuller greatness of glory which had been revealed to them. Life thus became to him a following of light;

he desired to know his own limitations, not because of the interest of them, but as indicating to him more clearly what he might undertake. It was a curious proof to him of the appropriateness of each man's conditions and environment to his own particular nature, when he reflected that no one whom he had ever known, however unhappy, however faulty, would ever willingly have exchanged identities with any one else. People desired to be rid of definite afflictions, definite faults; they desired and envied particular qualities, particular advantages that others possessed, but he could not imagine that any one in the world would exchange any one else's identity for his own; one would like perhaps to be in another's place, and this was generally accompanied by a feeling that one would be able to make a much better thing of another's sources of happiness and enjoyment, than the person whose prosperity or ability one envied seemed to make. But he could hardly conceive of any extremity of despair so great as to make a human being willing to accept the lot of another in its entirety. Even one's own faults and limitations were dear to one; the whole thing—character, circumstances, relations with others, position—made up to each person the most interesting problem in the world; and this immense consciousness of sepa-

rateness ; even of essential superiority, was perhaps the strongest argument that Hugh knew in favour of the preservation of a personal identity after death.

Hugh then found himself in this position : he was no longer young, but he seemed to himself to have retained the best part of youth, its openness to new impressions, its zest, its sense of the momentousness of occasions, its hopefulness ; he found himself with duties which he felt himself capable of discharging ; with a trained literary instinct and a real power of expression ; even if he had not hitherto produced any memorable work, he felt that he was equipped for the task, if only some great and congenial theme presented itself to his mind. He found himself with a small circle of friends, with a competence sufficient for his simple needs ; day by day there opened upon his mind ideas, thoughts, and prospects of ever-increasing mystery and beauty ; as to his character and temperament, he found himself desiring to empty himself of all extraneous elements, all conventional traditions, all adopted ideas ; his idea of life indeed was that it was an educative process, and that the further that the soul could advance upon the path of self-knowledge and sincerity, the more that it could cast away all the things that were

not of its essence, the better prepared one was to be filled with the divine wisdom. The deeper that he plunged into the consideration of the mysterious conditions and laws which surrounded him, the greater the mystery became; but instead of becoming more hopeless, it seemed to him that the dawn appeared to brighten every moment, as one came closer to the appreciation of one's own ignorance, weakness and humility. Instead of drawing nearer to despair, he drew every day nearer to a tender simplicity, a larger if more distant hope, an intenser desire to be at one with the vast Will that had set him where he was, and that denied him as yet a knowledge of the secret. As he ascended with slow steps into the dark mountain of life, the kingdoms of the world became more remote, the noise of their shouting more faint. He thought, with no compassion, but with a wondering tenderness, of the busy throng beneath; but he saw that, one by one, spirits smitten with the divine hope slipped from that noisy world, and, like himself, began to climb the solitary hills. What lay on the other side? That he could not even guess; but he had a belief in the richness, the largeness of the mind of God; and he saw as in a vision the day breaking on a purer and sweeter world, full of great surprises, mighty

thoughts, pure joys; he knew not whether it was near or far, but something in his heart told him that it was assuredly there!

XLII

How swiftly the summer melted into the autumn! the old lime-trees in the college court were soon all gold; how bravely that gold seemed to enrich the heart, on the still, clear, fresh mornings of St. Luke's summer! That wise physician of souls has indeed had set aside for him the most inspiriting, the most healing days of the year, days of tonic coolness, of invigorating colour, of bracing sun; and then the winter closes in, when light is short, and the sun is low and cold; when the eye is grateful for the rich brown of naked fields, leafless woods, and misty distances. Yet there is a solemn charm about the darkening day, when the sun sets over the wide plain rolled in smoky vapours and gilded banks of cloud; and then there is the long fire-lit evening to follow, when books give up their secrets and talk is easiest.

The summer, for all its enervating heat, its piercing light, was the time, so Hugh thought, for reflection. In winter the mind is often sunk in a sort of comfortable drowsiness, and

hibernates within its secure cell. Hugh found the activities of work very absorbing in those darker days: his thoughts took on a more placid, more contented tinge. Early in the year he walked alone along the Backs at Cambridge. He passed the great romantic gateposts of St. John's, with the elms of the high garden towering over them, his mind occupied with a hundred small designs. It was a shock of inexpressible surprise, as he passed by the clear stream that runs over its sandy shallows, and feeds the garden moats, to see that in the Wilderness the ground was bright with the round heads of the yellow aconite, the first flower to hear the message of spring. The appearance of that brave and hardy flower in that particular place had a peculiar and moving association for Hugh. More than twenty years before, in his undergraduate days, in a time of deep perplexity of mind, he had walked that way on a bright Sunday morning, his young heart burdened with sorrowful preoccupation. How hard those youthful griefs had been to bear! they were so unfamiliar, they seemed so irreparably overwhelming; one had not learned to look over them or through them; they darkened the present, they hung like a black cloud over the future. How fantastic, how exaggerated those

woes had been, and yet how unbearably real! He had stood, he remembered, to watch the mild sunlight strike in soft shafts among the trees. The hardy blossoms, cold and scentless, but so unmistakably alive, had given him a deep message of hope, a thrill of expectation. He had gone back, he remembered, and in a glow of impassioned emotion had written a little poem on the theme, in a locked note-book, to which he confided his inmost thoughts. He could recall some of the poor stanzas still, so worthless in expression, yet with so fiery a heart.

The thought of the long intervening years came back to Hugh with a sense of wonder and gratitude. He had half expected then, he remembered, that some great experience would perhaps come to him, and lift him out of his shadowed thoughts, his vague regrets. That great experience had not befallen him, but how far more wisely and tenderly he had been dealt with instead! Experience had been lavished upon him; he had gained interest, he had practised activity, and he had found patience and hope by the way. He knew no more than he knew then of the great and dim design that lay behind the world, and now he hardly desired to know. He had been led, he

had been guided, with a perfect tenderness, a deliberate love. The only lost hours, after all, had been the hours which he had given to anxiety and doubt, to ambition and desire. When the moment had come, which he had heavily anticipated, there had never been any question as to how he should act; and yet he had not been a mere puppet moved by forces outside his control. He could not harmonise the sense of guidance with the sense of freedom, and yet both had undoubtedly been there. He had been dealt with both frankly and tenderly; not saved from fruitful mistakes, not forbidden to wander; and yet his mistakes had never been permitted to be irreparable, his wanderings had taught him to desire the road rather than to dread the desert.

A great sense of tranquillity and peace settled down upon his spirit. He cast himself in an utter dependence upon the mighty will of the Father; and in that calm of thought his little cares, and they were many, faded like wreaths of steam cast abroad upon the air. To be sincere and loving and quiet, that was the ineffable secret; not to scheme for fame, or influence or even for usefulness; to receive as in a channel the strength and sweetness of God.

A bird hidden in a dark yew-tree began softly to flute, in that still afternoon, a little song that seemed like a prayer for bright days and leafy trees and embowered greenness; a prayer that should be certainly answered, and the fulfilment of which should be dearer for the delay. Hugh knew in that moment that the life he had lived and would live was, in its barreness and bleakness, its veiling cloud, its chilly airs, but the preface to some vast and glorious springtime of the spirit, when hill and valley should break together into sunlit bloom, when the trees should be clothed with leaf, when birds should sing clear for joy, and the soul should be utterly satisfied. The old poet had said that the saddest thing was to remember happy days in hours of sorrow; but to remember the dreary days in a season of calm content, what joy could be compared to that? His heart was slowly filled, as a cup with wine, with an unutterable hope; but he desired no longer that some great thing should come to him, which should exalt him above his fellows and make him envied and admired. Rather should the humblest and the lowest place suffice, some corner of life which he should deck, and tend, and keep bright and sweet; a few hands to grasp, a few hearts to encourage; and

even so to do that with no set purpose, but by merely letting the gentle joy of the soul overflow, like a spring of brimming waters, fed from high hills of faith.

And so, like a figure that passes down a corridor and enters at an open door, Hugh passes from our sight. He mingles with his fellows, he goes to and fro, he speaks and he is silent, he smiles and weeps; he may not be distinguished from other men, and there lies his best happiness, because he is waiting upon God. His life may be long or short; he may mix with the crowd or sit solitary. If he differs at all from others, it is in this, that he desires no costly thread of gold, no bright-hued skein that he may weave his texture of life. Upon that tapestry will be depicted no knight in shining armour; no nymphs with floating vestures, no paradise of bowers; rather dim hills and cloud-hung valleys, and the darkness of haunted groves; with one figure of shadowy hue in sober raiment, walking earnestly as one that has a note of the way; he would desire nothing but what may uphold him; he would fear nothing but what may stain him; he would shun the company of none who need him; he would clasp the hand of any gentle-hearted pilgrim. So would he walk

in quietness to the dim valley and the dark stream, believing that the Father has a place and a work and a joy for the smallest thing that His hands have made.

THE END